Number Eleven

CRIMINAL™

Ed Brubaker
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image®

by
Ed Brubaker and
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Colors by
Jacob
Phillips

Cruel Summer

Part Seven

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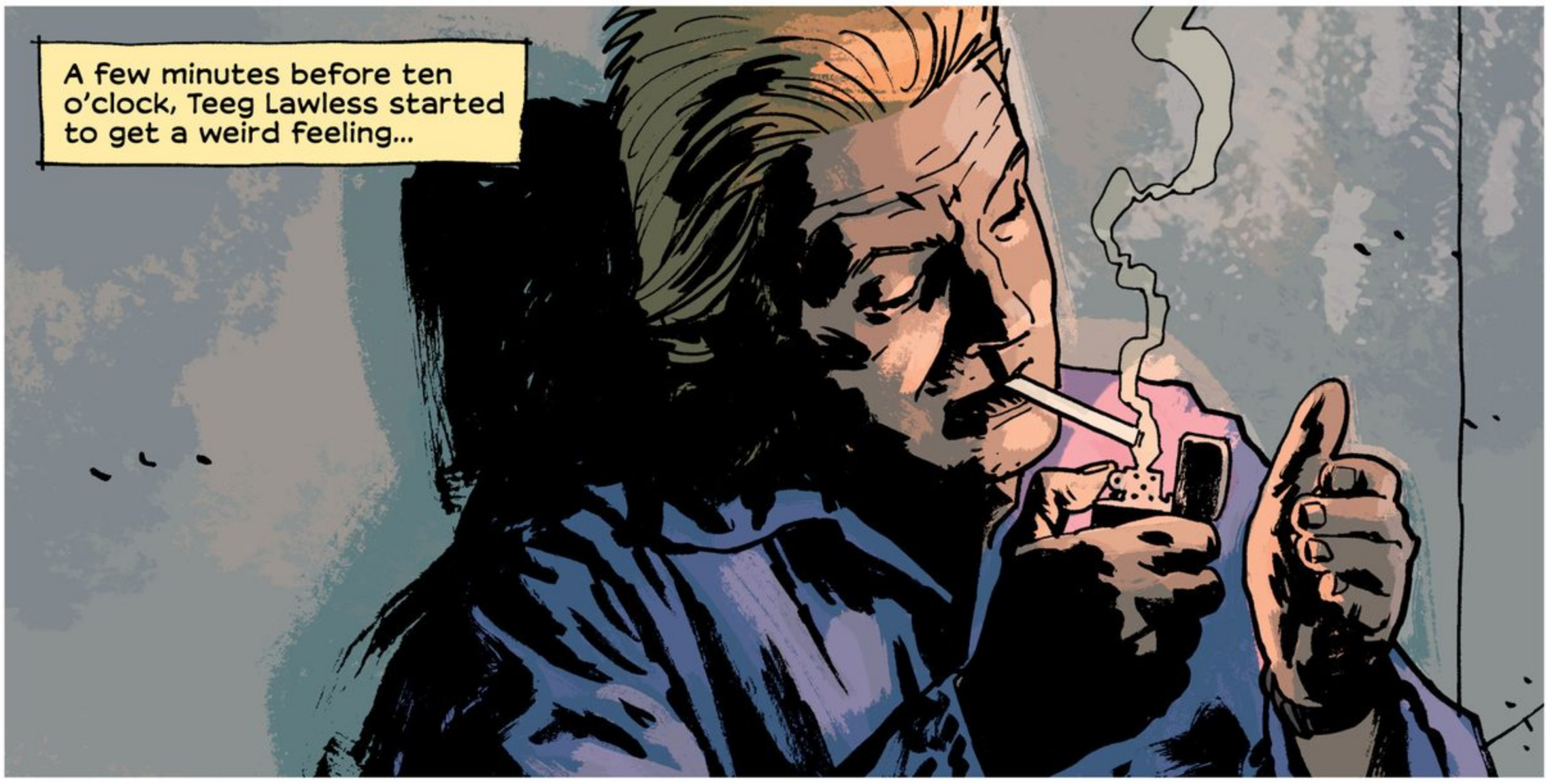
The Last Score



He had wandered out to get a look at the show while he was waiting, mostly out of curiosity...

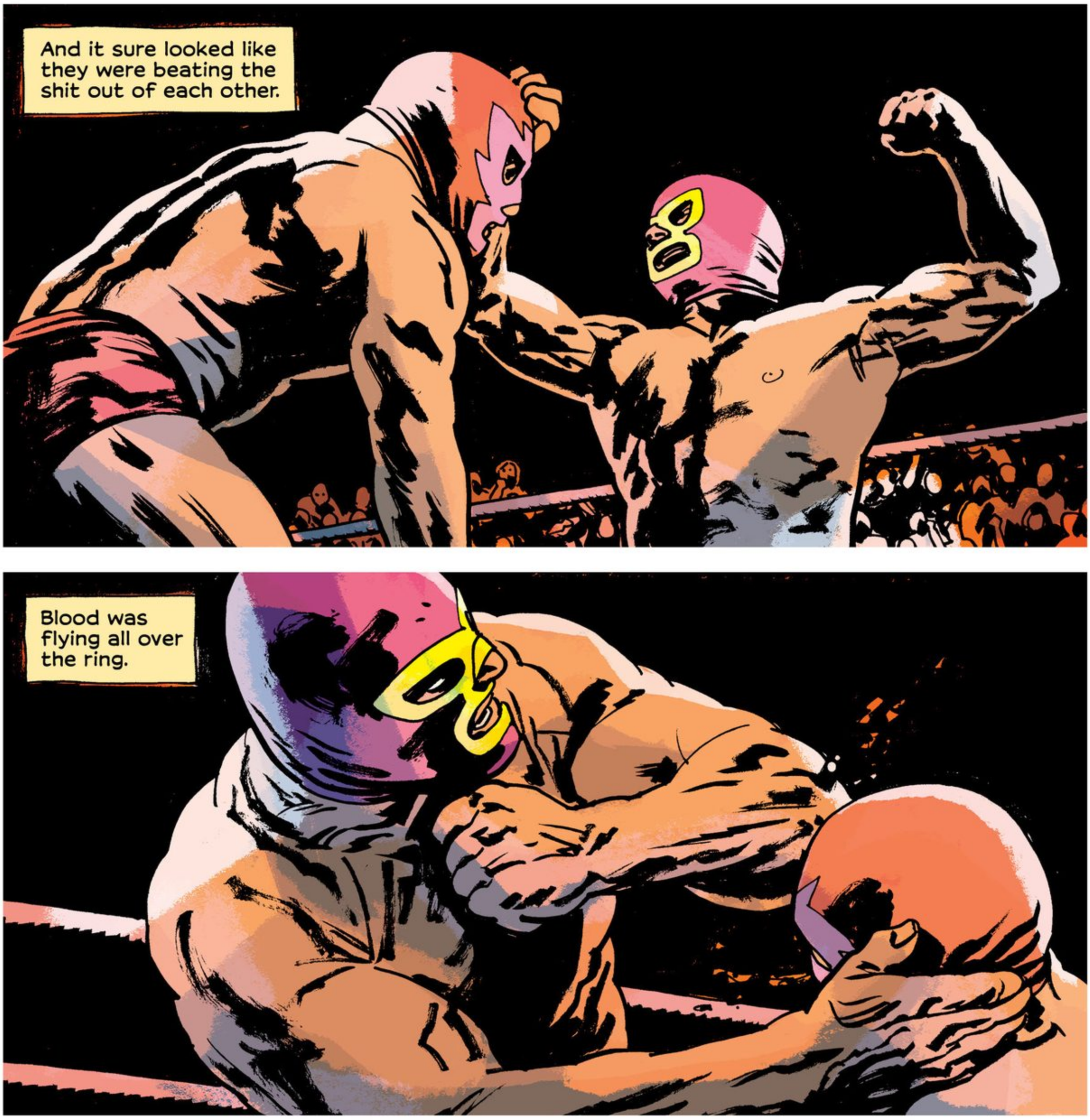
GOT A LIGHT?

NO.

He'd seen Ricky and his friends watching this stuff on TV, but Teeg had never really paid attention.

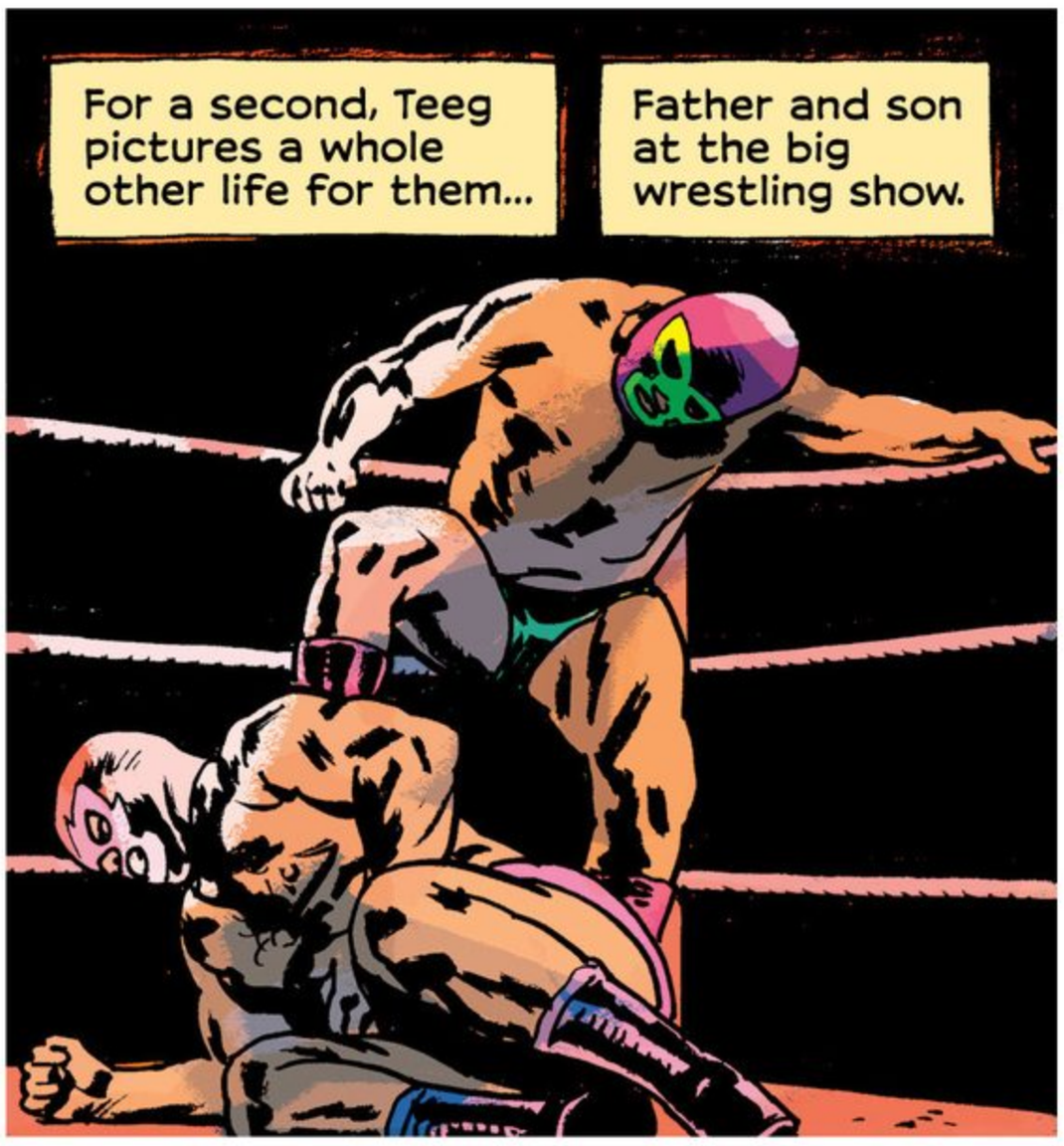
He wasn't into wrestling... It was all fake.

Still, in person, it was a hell of a spectacle.

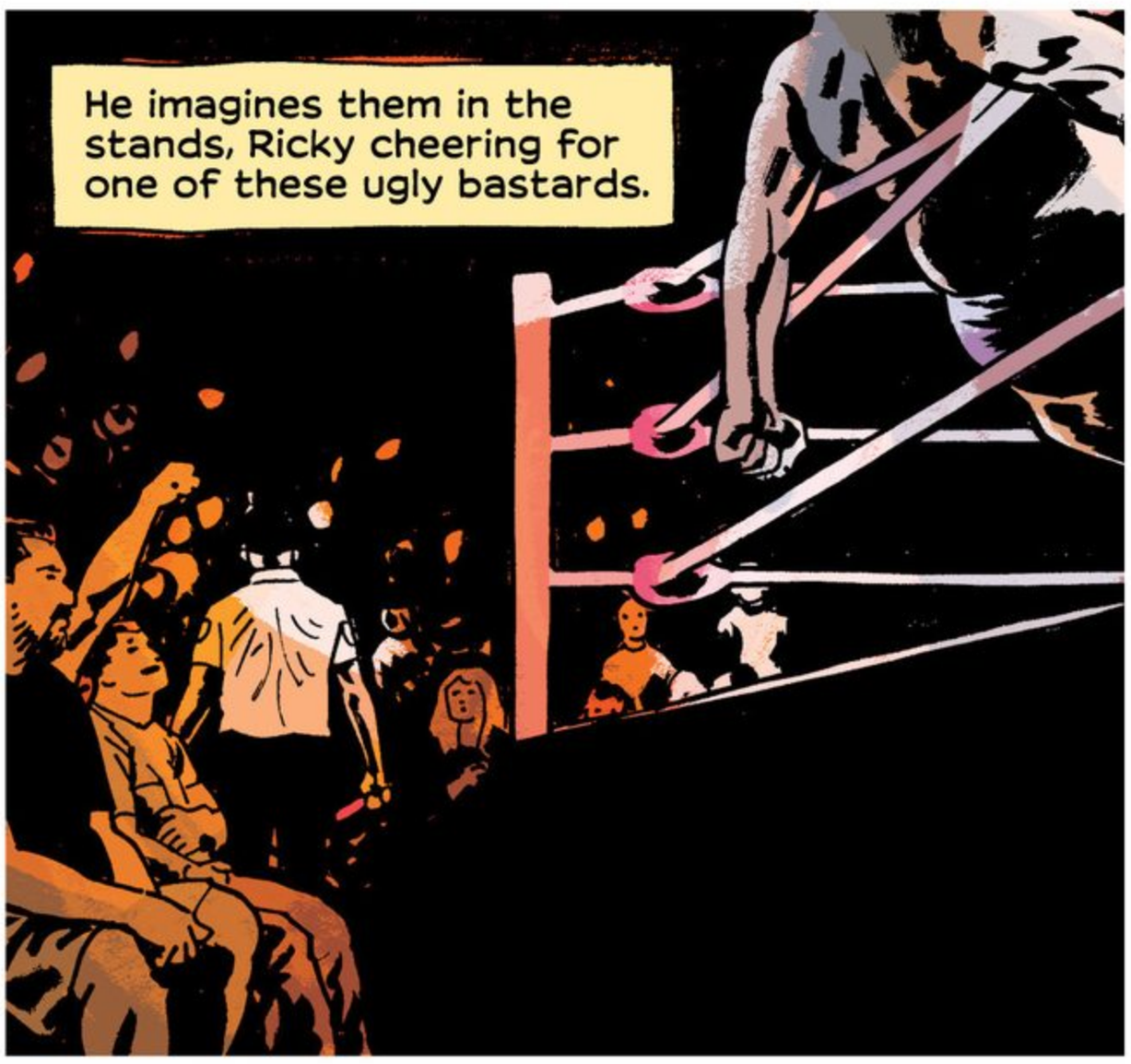

And it sure looked like they were beating the shit out of each other.
Blood was flying all over the ring.

And the crowd loved it.

Just like Ricky would have.


For a second, Teeg pictures a whole other life for them...
Father and son at the big wrestling show.

Cotton candy and popcorn.
Maybe letting the kid sip from his beer when no one's looking.


He imagines them in the stands, Ricky cheering for one of these ugly bastards.

And that's when he spots it... The *reason* for his weird feeling.
FUCK.

The *security guards* aren't where they're *supposed* to be.

They're patrolling... On high alert.

Almost like they're looking for something.

And Jane is down there in that crowd, waiting to set off the ***diversion***.

Jane was smart.

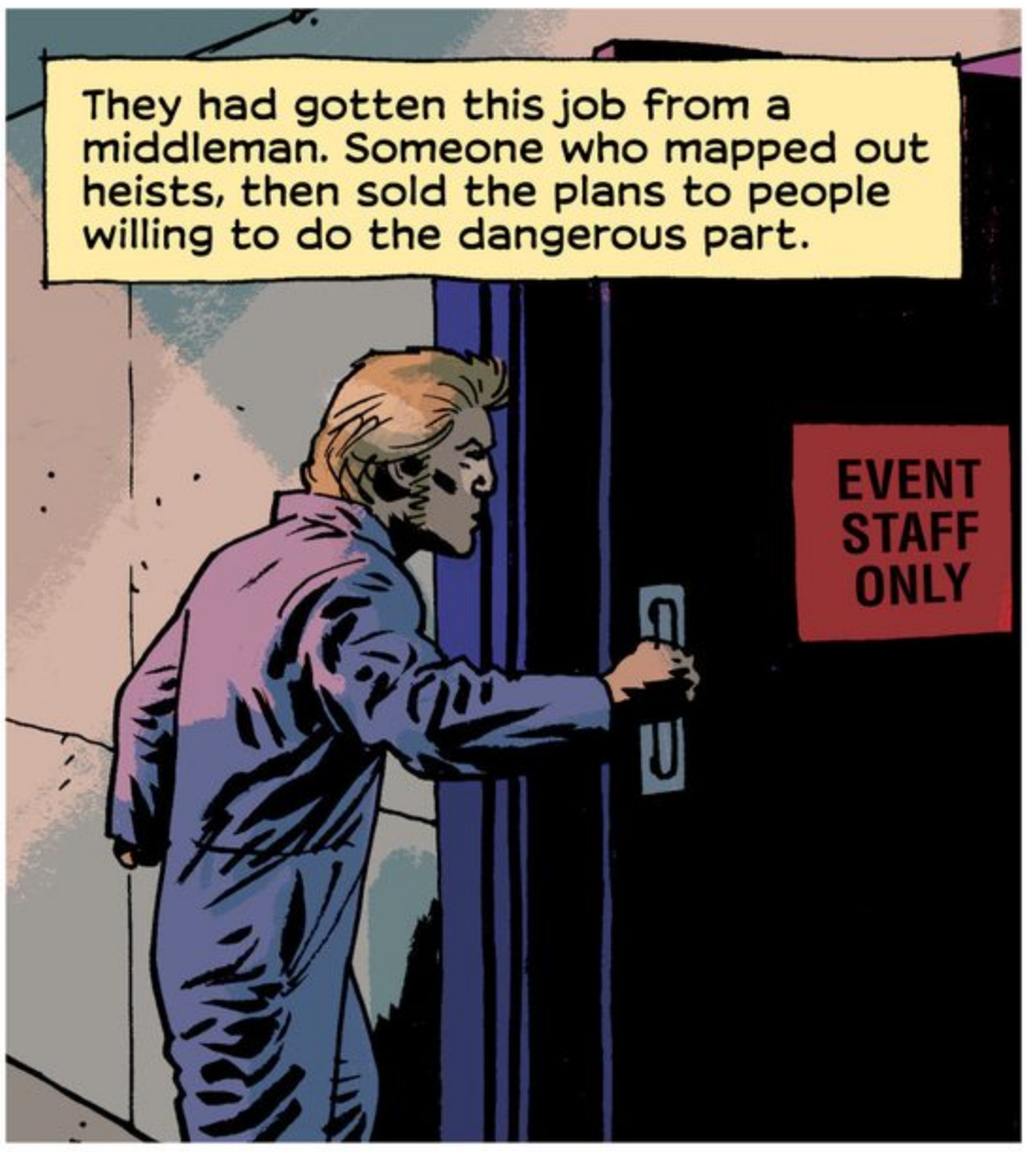
She could handle herself.

But still, those guards should be near the ***corridor*** entrance.

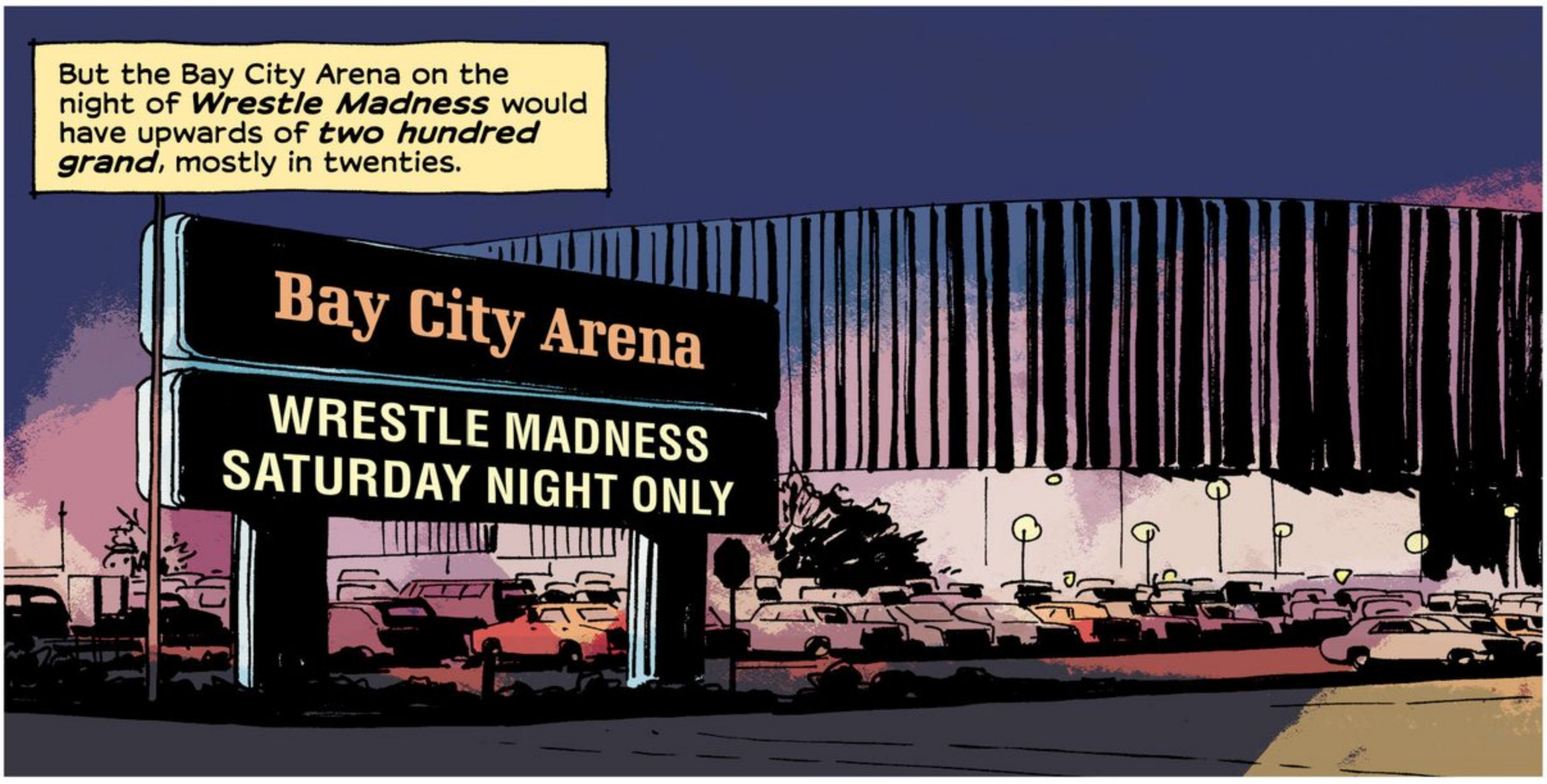
SHIT.

Two minutes now, before there's no turning back...

And suddenly Teeg has no idea if he can trust this plan.


They had gotten this job from a middleman. Someone who mapped out heists, then sold the plans to people willing to do the dangerous part.
EVENT STAFF ONLY

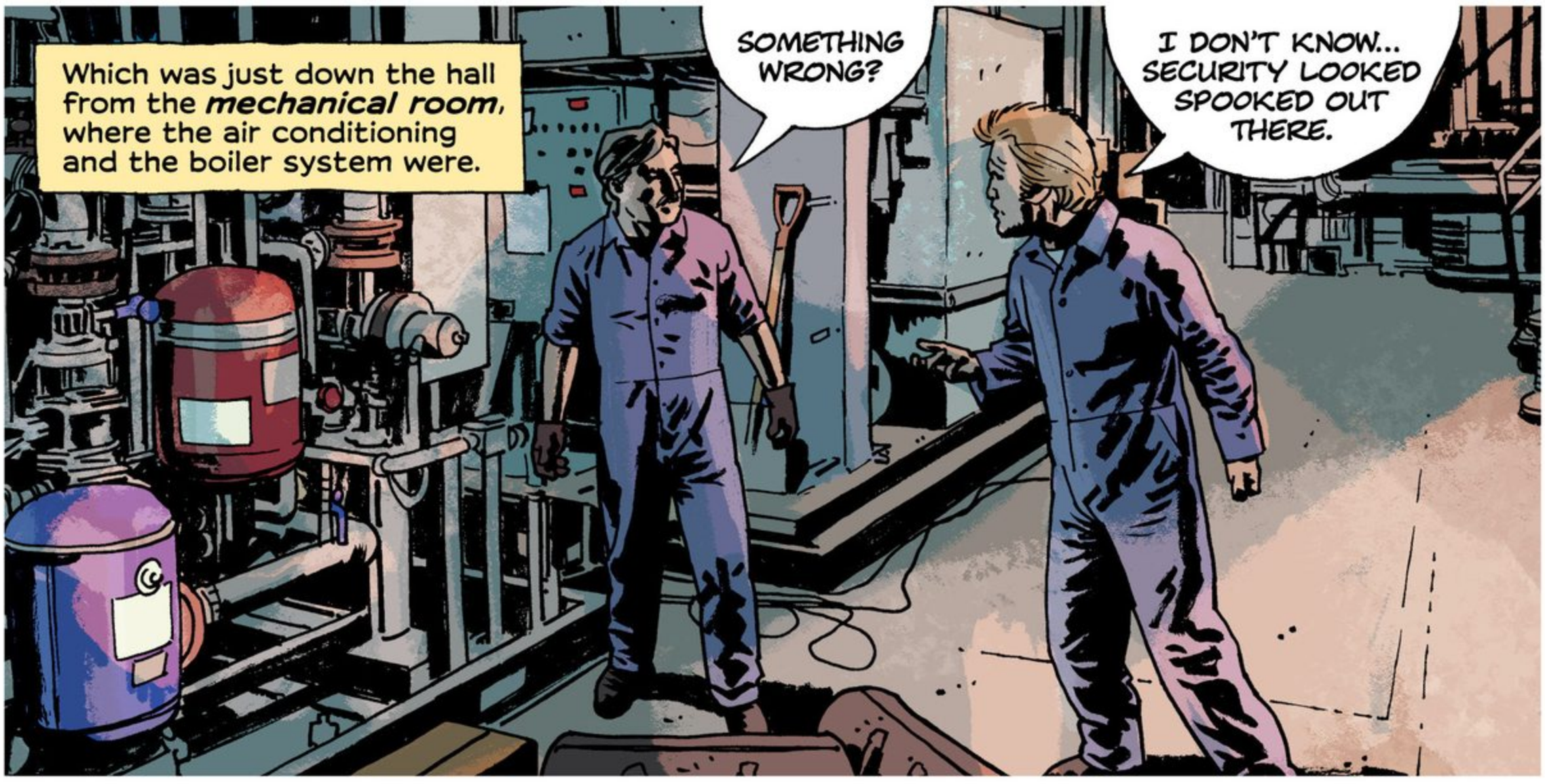
Cash was getting harder and harder to find these days... Even a bank job might only net you ten grand, if not less.


But the Bay City Arena on the night of ***Wrestle Madness*** would have upwards of ***two hundred grand***, mostly in twenties.
Bay City Arena
WRESTLE MADNESS
SATURDAY NIGHT ONLY

Four hours of ***concession stand*** sales... Ten-dollar beers. Five-dollar hotdogs and popcorn.
Fifteen thousand people in the stands.

And security was lax... They had just a single runner and guard picking up the money every hour...

And bringing it back to the counting office...


Which was just down the hall from the *mechanical room*, where the air conditioning and the boiler system were.
SOMETHING WRONG?
I DON'T KNOW... SECURITY LOOKED SPOOKED OUT THERE.

NOT SURE IT MEANS ANYTHING.

JUST KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN...
OUR GUY MIGHT HAVE FUCKED US.

The plan had come with an ***inside man***, the assistant manager of the arena...

Which was how they'd gotten in tonight.

This guy had found a "problem" with the ventilation system...

SEEMS LIKE HALF THE ***SYSTEM*** IS OFFLINE, BOSS.

WE BETTER GET SOMEONE OUT ***RIGHT NOW***...

CAN'T HAVE THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE HERE WITH NO ***AIR CONDITIONING.***

WE'LL LOSE OUR INSURANCE.

OKAY... YOU TAKE CARE OF IT, PHIL.

And the crew that showed up to fix it was Teeg Lawless and Tommy Patterson.

WESTLAKE ELECTRIC... WE GOT AN ***EMERGENCY*** CALL.

YEAH... GO ON UP THERE AND PARK ON THE RIGHT...

They spent the next hour or so pretending to be air conditioning repairmen...

WE GOT IT WORKING FOR NOW, BUT I NEED TO REPLACE THESE *CIRCUITS*...

MIGHT BE HERE A WHILE.

SURE... DO WHATEVER YOU NEED TO.

And once the show started, the arena staff basically forgot about them.

They had a full house of screaming wrestling fans to deal with, after all.

It was just about ***waiting*** then...

For the last ***cash run*** to be brought to the counting room...

And for their ***diversion***.

Jane had placed ***fire bombs*** in trash cans around the arena.

She'd be outside, in a getaway car, before they went off...

0:57

But Kurt and Ringo were changing into security guard uniforms.

Ready to take advantage of the chaos...

And make sure Teeg and Tommy had a clean exit.

FORTY SECONDS...

THIRTY...

HEY FELLAS, I'M GONNA ***NEED*** -

...HOLY SHIT...

ON YOUR KNEES, HANDS UP... *NOW.*

GET HIS *CUFFS!*

NO TIME FOR THAT...

KRAAK

UKK -- !

KNNCH

!!

Another guard who's not where he's ***supposed*** to be...

THIS IS FUCKED...

They should walk away now... They both know it...

But then the fire bombs go off and alarms scream through the building...

AHH!

SHIT!

And they're so close.

WHAT ARE WE DOING?!

FUCK IT.

THROW THE GAS!

A tear gas canister...

Tossed into the ventilation ducts...

Blowing right into the counting room.

The clerks inside won't even know what's happening to them...

Not at first.

HKKK -- !
KKKKHH -- !!

They'll just think they're going to die... like all the people out there...

Running from the smoke.

Teeg and Tommy don't even need to breach the door.

...HHHUUU...

These guys open it for them.

...

EVERYBODY DOWN! NOW!

UNHH -- !

DON'T FUCKING MOVE!

They're all practically incapacitated... It's perfect.

Except for the ***two extra guards*** that weren't supposed to be here.

WE'RE NOT *HERE* FOR YOU...

SO DON'T MAKE YOUR *CHILDREN* ORPHANS.

But they're coughing their lungs up anyway, so it doesn't matter...

JUST STAY DOWN AND BE CALM...

It just reminds Teeg again that ***somebody*** screwed them.

...AND WE'LL BE *OUT OF HERE* IN TWO MINUTES.

And there aren't a lot of people that could be.

HEY MAN...

...EVERYTHING GOOD?
YEAH... ALL CLEAR NOW.

HERE... EVERYBODY GRAB ONE.

ALL RIGHT, I WANT YOU TO COUNT TO FIVE HUNDRED BEFORE YOU GET OFF THAT FLOOR...
IF I SEE ANYONE FOLLOWING US, I WILL NOT GIVE ANY WARNINGS.
SO BE SMART AND KEEP LIVING.

ALANGALANGALANGALAN

WHICH WAY?

TAKE A RIGHT UP THERE... AT THE VIP ENTRANCE.

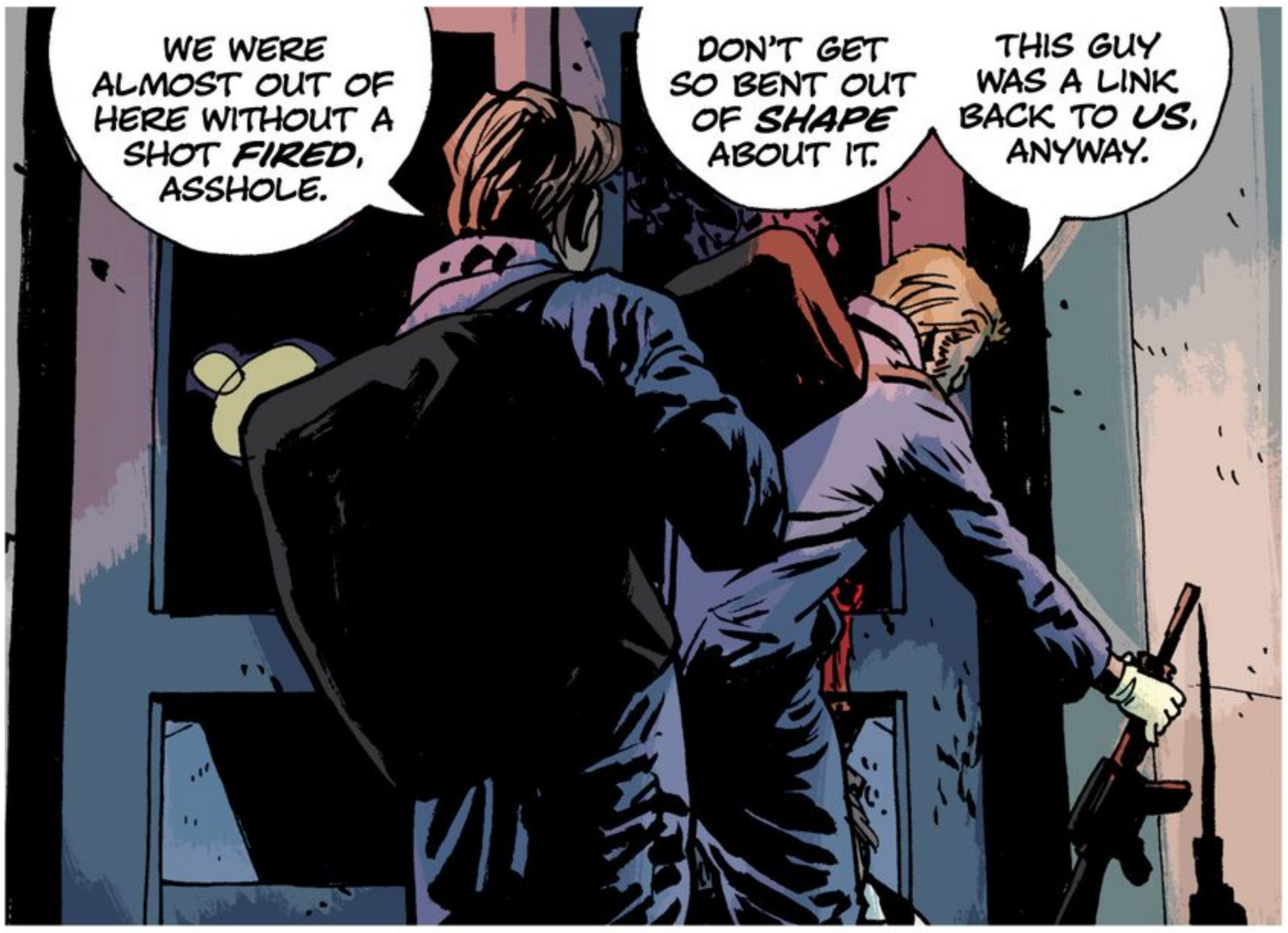
FUCK... *FINALLY.*

I GOT A *PLANE* TO CATCH, BRO.

THOUGHT SOMETHIN' MIGHTA GONE *WRONG.*

IT DID.

WHAT THE HELL?
HE SCREWED US.
HOW?
SECURITY WAS ALL OVER THE PLACE...
IT WAS SOME KINDA SET-UP.
WHAT?
WHY THE FUCK WOULD HE BE WAITING FOR US, THEN?
...HUNH...
I DON'T KNOW...
SOMETHING WAS FUCKED, THOUGH...
YOU SAW IT, TOO.


WE WERE ALMOST OUT OF HERE WITHOUT A SHOT *FIRED*, ASSHOLE.
DON'T GET SO BENT OUT OF *SHAPE* ABOUT IT.
THIS GUY WAS A LINK BACK TO *US*, ANYWAY.

NOW WE'RE SAFE...

By now the robbery's been called in, and half the cops in town are on the way here...
But their getaway is simple.

It's chaos outside the arena now...

Everyone honking their horns, trying to get out.

So they just walk right across the parking lot...
And no one even notices them.
They have three cars in an alley across the street from the arena...
OH... THANK FUCKING CHRIST...
So they can split up and drive different routes to the safe house...
Just in case.

But that's just more of Tommy Patterson being ***uptight***, Teeg thinks.

Fucking Tommy, giving him shit...

Somebody tipped off security, they were on high alert.

It ***had*** to be that guy.

No... To hell with this, he's not going to let Tommy's bullshit get in his head.

They just walked out with the biggest score he's ever seen...

Way better than they were expecting.

Maybe half a million or more, from the weight of those bags.
This was a time to celebrate, not worry.

They had the money...

Nothing else mattered.

WHAT?

NOTHING.

It felt unreal.

NO ONE ELSE IS *HERE* YET.

GOOD.

By sunset the next day, he and Jane would be on a beach in the Bahamas.

Drinking and smoking.

Free.

BABY... YOU SMELL LIKE A *CHEMICAL SPILL* OR SOMETHING...

GO GET CHANGED OUT OF ALL THAT STUFF...

GET CLEANED UP.

OKAY... KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR TOMMY AND THE GUYS.

Happiness was a strange feeling.

For a second, Teeg wondered if he'd ever get used to it...

But then he saw the open window...

??

To Be Concluded

The Secret Ingredient is Crime

Okay, I hope you're excited for next issue now.

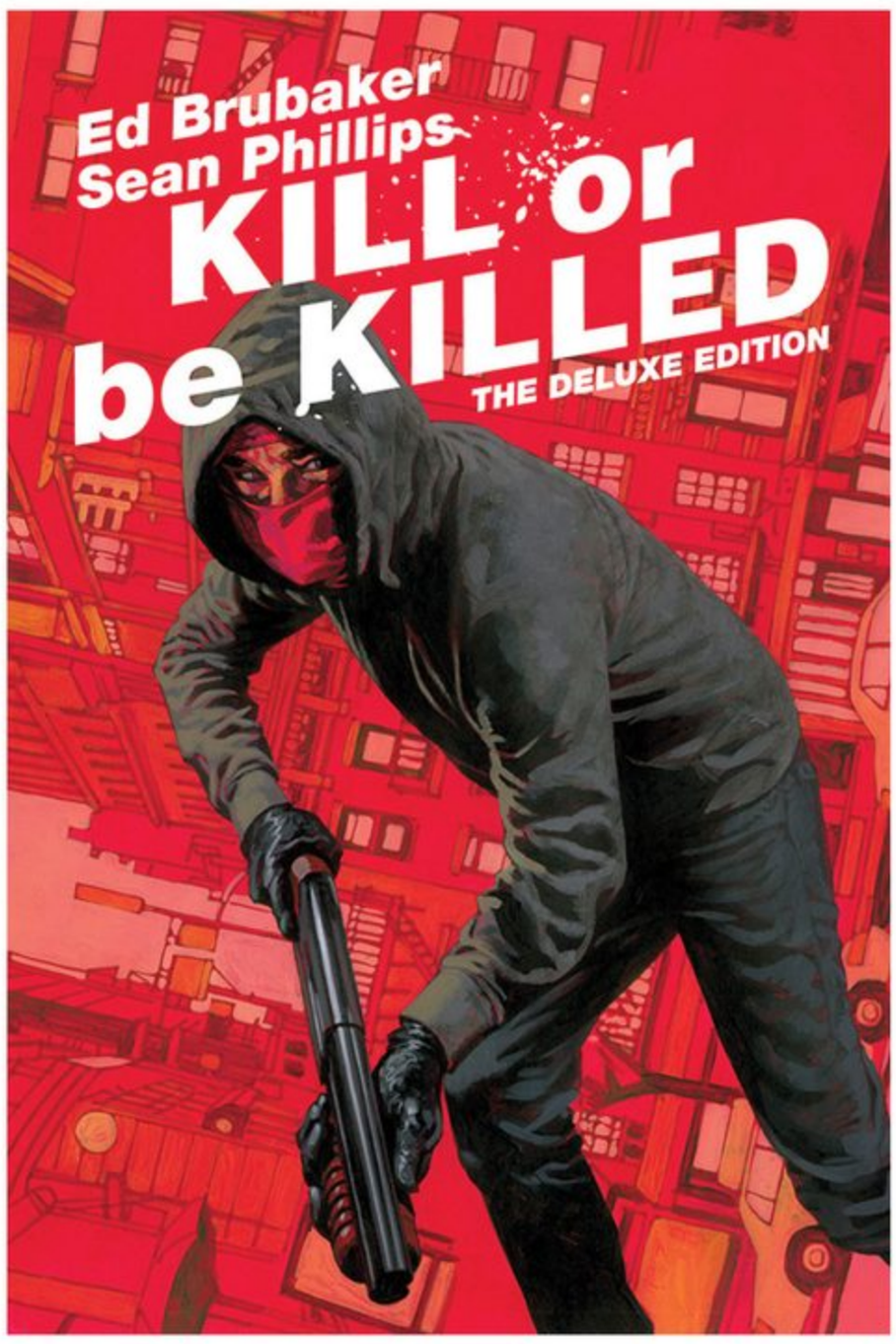
And I won't say anything more to spoil it for you.

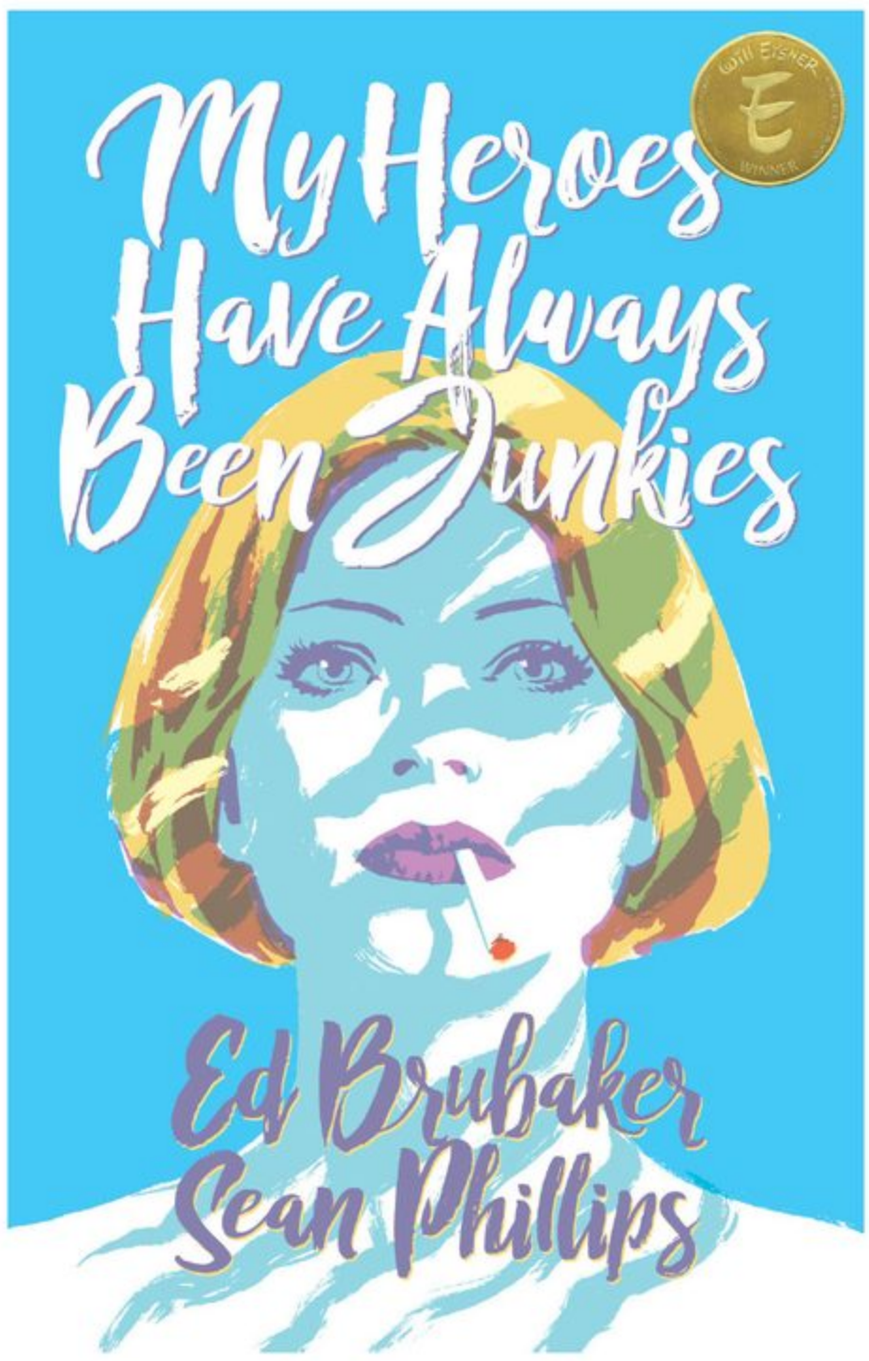
But, fucked up ending there, right?

***

We had two new editions of our books come out last month, for those of you that might have missed them. The KILL OR BE KILLED Deluxe Edition hardback and the MY HEROES HAVE ALWAYS BEEN JUNKIES paperback.

Both of these books came out even better than I was hoping they would, and I'm really proud of the production quality and design. I know a lot of our readers like to wait for the deluxe hardbacks, so if you're one of those, your wait is now over.





In other KILL OR BE KILLED news, the movie is still an active concern, and I will hopefully have more news on that front very soon.

***

In "what have I been watching?" news... I managed to catch the second season of END OF THE FUCKING WORLD on Netflix, and I really liked it. Feels very much a companion for the first season, and picks up part of the graphic novel plot that got left out of season one. Creepy and funny and sad all at once.

LODGE 49 just got cancelled, which is a shame. It was one of the oddest shows on television, and I really loved it. A So Cal comedy-drama about a surfer who joins a lodge of strange older people and goes on a mysterious mystical journey... I mean, that sort of describes it. I hope someone else picks it up, because it was charming as hell, and different than everything else out there, which in this market is saying a lot.

It's a few years old now, but I finally watched Christian Petzold's film PHOENIX, which blew me away. A post-WW2 noir, about a woman who survived the Nazi death camps, I felt haunted by this film for a few days, and loved how much it made me work to feel the full impact. In a world where every movie holds your hand these days, it really stood out. It's on all the steaming sites for rent, I believe. Highly recommended.

On the reading front, the new James Sallis book – SARAH JANE – is as amazing as his stuff usually is. Sallis is one of those writer's writers, who you should definitely check out if you haven't heard of him.

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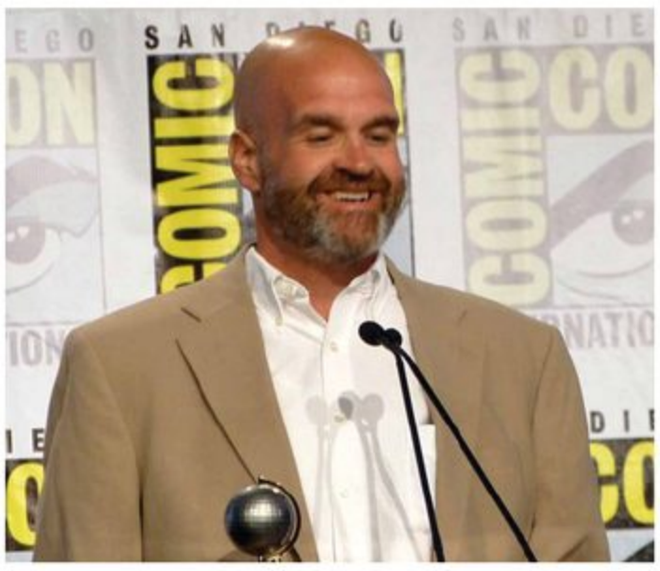
I try to keep these text pages light, usually, but I wanted to say a few words about Tom Spurgeon, a friend of mine for over half my life, who died suddenly last month (last week as I write this).



Back when I was just starting to get published, in my early 20s, I and a lot of other comics people lived in Seattle. It was a really good time to be there, to be young and poor and driven to create art. It was a very supportive scene, overall. A lot of meet-ups to share work-in-progress, a lot of parties at different cartoonists' houses. And rent was cheap. It was pre-internet, and there were a lot of exciting things happening in comics, which were really just starting to break into the bookstore market and be taken seriously.

Tom moved to Seattle in 1994 to work for the Comics Journal, and I can't remember the first time I met him. Probably at one of Eric Reynolds and Al Columbia's house parties. But it was clear right away he was sharp and funny as hell. And Tom was one of the people who kind of roamed between the various cliques in town (as were Eric and Al), so sometimes he'd come to parties that our group was having, and we'd end up out on someone's front porch talking about comics or old newspaper strips, or just life. We didn't hang out a ton, but it felt like we actually knew each other.

And then the years passed and we all moved away, and he became one of those old friends I'd see at conventions a few times a year. That's how you go through life with people from your formative days. It's like a Neil Simon play or something, set at some hotel restaurant with cosplayers wandering in the background, and the cast getting older every scene... Having variations of the same conversations for twenty-five years. That was how it was with Tom. We'd talk on the phone every couple of years, or meet up at conventions for a breakfast with other old friends now and then.

Tom was someone I was always happy to run into, and who always took time to talk to me about my work, to congratulate me on things that had done well. Not many people do that, really - especially once you've "made it" - but Tom understood how hard comics people work, and how much what we do means to us. He was a journalist and a comics historian whose heart was always on the side of the creators, especially the ones that had been ripped off over the years.

For me, Tom was one of the people who helped me be okay with moving from being a cartoonist to being a writer for other artists instead. He was the friend who pointed out that I always kept a notebook, not a sketchbook. I don't know if he ever knew how important his support was, and I have a feeling that I'm not alone in feeling that way.

I wish I could write something more elegant about him, but I can honestly barely write this. Tom was a big presence of this industry for the last three decades, he was taken from us far too young, and I will miss him.

***

Up in our back pages this month, Kim Morgan writes a great piece on VIOLENT SATURDAY, a 50s era heist movie (see, it's the theme of the issue) and Sean illustrates it for us, as always.

***

Write to us with questions or comments: criminalcomic@gmail.com and we'll be back next month with the final chapter in CRUEL SUMMER.

Violent Saturday

by
Kim Morgan
illustrated by
Sean Phillips

Regular small-town American life. Regular small-town American life in the *1950s*. What did that ever mean? The "regular" part? By regular does one mean purse-snatching librarians, bank clerk window peepers, cheating wives, drunken husbands and little kids ashamed of their fathers for not serving in the war? Yes, that sounds about regular (seriously, it does). Oh, and Lee Marvin (that's not so regular given – who is like Lee Marvin?). But … Lee Marvin. Lee Marvin getting his inhaler knocked out of his hand when a kid bumps into him on the street – and then the sharp-suited, blue hat-clad Lee Marvin cruelly presses his shoe on the kid's hand when the little boy politely attempts to pick up the inhaler for him. "Beat it," Lee Marvin says to the pained child.

To be fair regarding regular small-town American life and Lee Marvin, Marvin (as Dill), doesn't live in the Arizona town of Richard Fleisher's *Violent Saturday* (1955). Dill is there for a nice little (violent) bank robbery he's part of – with his partners, Harper (played by Stephen McNally) and Chapman (played by J. Carrol Naish). But even Dill reveals he's attempted some kind of domestic normalcy (regular, again, whatever that is) – once. It didn't take. In one of the best scenes in the movie, Dill wakes up the night before the robbery thinking too much about his life. Perhaps the town (which we've been introduced to in just *some* of its domestic dysfunction – we'll see more of it later) is getting to him. He walks (with an intriguing sweetness) into Harper's room in his pajamas and talks about his past marriage while, perpetually stuffed-up, he's sniffing his (presumably Benzedrine) inhaler – a fascinating detail here – that Dill is also likely a drug addict. He says, "I must have the heebie-jeebies or something, I can't sleep." After lamenting that their partner Chapman is "mean" – which is a little hilarious given how Dill treats children, while cool-headed Chapman will later give a clearly violence-fascinated kid a candy while he's robbing the bank – Dill extends Chapman's meanness to women:

"There's nothing in this world as mean as a mean woman. You know I got to thinking about all the things that have happened to me on account of women in there when I couldn't sleep. Boy they can sure ruin you… Remember the broad I married, Harp? Back in Detroit? There was a real dilly for you. When I first married her, I thought she was a real sweepstakes prize. Well, a little on the skinny side, but that's always how it's been with me. No meat on 'em. Just skin and bones. I wonder why I go for skinny broads? Parmalee. That was her name… Left me for an undertaker. No kiddin', a lousy, two-bit undertaker. To tell you the truth I was half glad to see her go. She had too many bad habits. Got on my nerves. She used to go around the apartment all day in one of them, uh, you know, Chinese housecoats. Practically lived in it. Screwy habits like that. And all winter long she'd have a cold. Boy, she was the world champion when it come to a cold. And every two weeks, I'd catch it from her. (sniffs inhaler) I'll bet I caught better than 50 colds from that broad. (sniffs inhaler) That's what started me on this."

Yeah, even Lee Marvin's Dill got dumped for some regular run-of-the-mill undertaker. After this amusing monologue (beautifully delivered by Marvin), Chapman and Dill hear a noise outside and check it out. Just a man walking his dog. Regular American life.

Not really. Or, yes, really. That dog-walker is the peeper – mild-mannered bank clerk Harry (Tommy Noonan). He's married, but that doesn't stop a Peeping Tom, and he's about to scope pretty nurse Linda (Virginia Leith), hoping to catch her as she undresses with the blinds open. But he bumps into another townsperson who is also up to something no good – Elsie (Sylvia Sidney), the thieving librarian, stuffing a stolen purse in a trash can. Well, Elsie knows what Harry's up to, and Harry knows what Elsie is up to, and they share a tense conversation. "I just dare you to go to the police," she says (understandably disgusted by this guy – though she's mostly concerned about herself). It's a fascinating, sad scene, and extra layered by the dysfunction that came before it. Prior to this, Linda, who is soft on Boyd Fairchild (a terrific Richard Egan), threatened a man's wife. Well-off Boyd is married to Emily (Margaret Hayes), who is cheating on him with some lady-killer named Gil (Brad Dexter). Boyd gets soused at a bar, and Linda sees Boyd home – she gets him nicely tucked in on his couch. Nothing happens (though the two like each other a lot) and Boyd's wife comes in – late. "All I want is an excuse to pull the hair right out of your stupid head," Linda says to Emily.

But the movie, wisely, is not there to hate Emily or to take easy sides. In a moving scene, husband and wife discuss their problems and their hearts – they really do love each other. Emily, upset with herself says: "I've read about people like me. They're sick people. They shouldn't associate with decent people." (Who is "decent," the film seems to be asking.) Boyd calms her and they plan to make it work. Things will be better by morning.

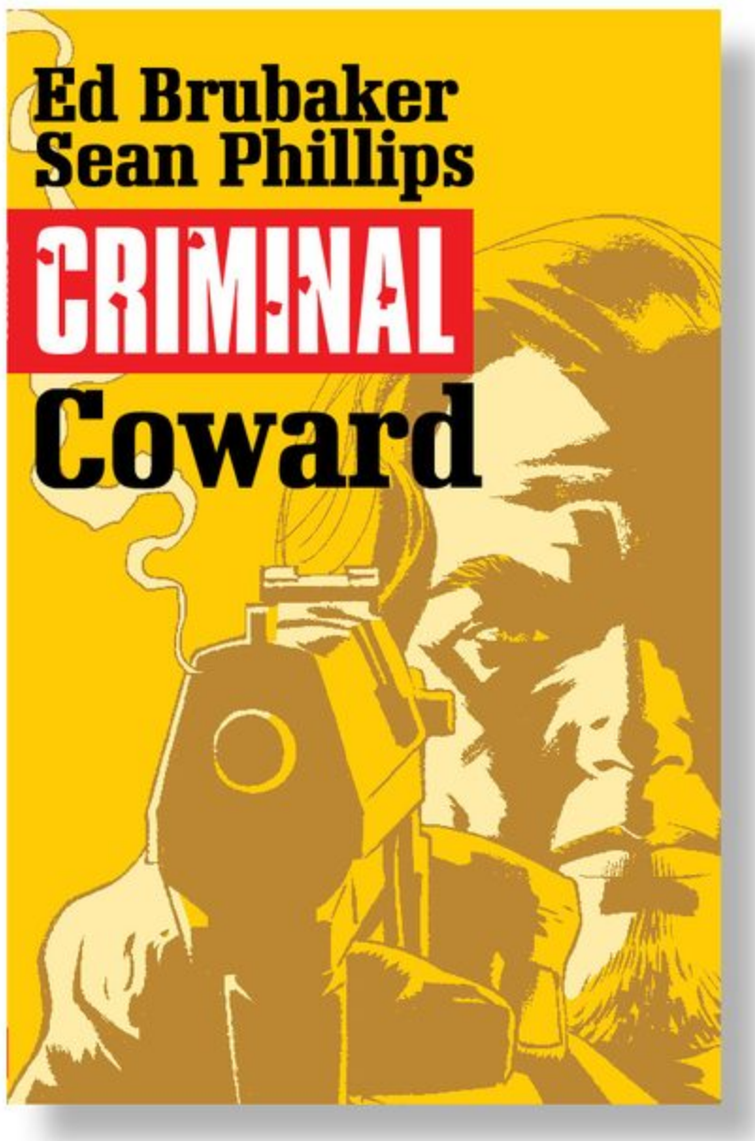
Well, no, they won't. Tomorrow is Saturday.

With the town's own emotional drama building up to such a fever pitch – it seems like the movie is just waiting for an explosion of some kind, and this gives the crime story of the movie a kind of extra punch in the gut to, well, human feeling – feelings that are already bruised, bashed around, violent inside – a mirror. It's a fascinating hybrid (screenplay by Sydney Boehm from a novel by William L. Heath) as directed by Fleischer (who crafted some great gritty crime pictures – *Armored Car Robbery* and *The Narrow Margin* among them) who handles the sunlit melodrama and violence with a palpable tension, and an incredible fluidity (the camera movement is beautiful) – emotions and actions in wonderful unison.

There's so much simultaneous repression and out in the open sadness here – even within the most "normal" family – Victor Mature's Shelley Martin whose kid, Stevie (Billy Chapin – from *The Night of the Hunter*) is fighting with another kid over his dad not serving in the war. Stevie thinks his dad is a coward. The kid is going to have to think again after Saturday, as Shelley, of course, is the guy nabbed by the bank robbers and dragged out to an Amish farm where peaceful Amish patriarch Stadt (Ernest Borgine) lives with his family. Shelley and the Amish family are tied up and left in the barn (the vision of everyone tied up is surreal and hyper-real at the same time – particularly in vivid color and Cinemascope), while the men rob the bank, and shoot both Harry and Emily in the process. The peeper lives. Emily, who is readying for her marriage-saving vacation with Boyd – dies. Near the end, broken-hearted Boyd says to Linda, "She looked awful, didn't she? Like she'd never been alive." My god.

Saturday gets even more violent. One of Stadt's kids is shot as Shelley tries to save himself and the family. (The robbery that leads to the showdown at the barn is superb – tense, honestly adult and scary – Fleisher doesn't even spare violence against children here, as we also saw with the hand-stepping). Shelley, as played by Mature, is supposedly the marquee hero of the story – and his bravery will, by the end, cause his kid to finally respect him (which is truly fucked up). But it is Borgnine's sweet Stadt who performs the lethal, life-saving blow (I will not reveal, it is too great a moment), going against his values, his religion – making the ending more complex than one might expect. With this – violence had to be done, we suppose, but it doesn't make that man feel better. Oh, but it makes Stevie feel better. "Boy, you got all of them, didn't you, Dad?" Stevie exclaims to his dad recovering in the hospital. Shelley reminds Stevie, "Being scared is only normal and human. No one was ever 100 percent a hero." Stevie doesn't really listen. He's just happy his dad is no longer a coward in his eyes. Meanwhile, poor Stadt and his family will live with how they feel. And an injured child.

As this film shows, being a lot of things is, as Shelley said, normal and human. The picture is both wonderfully melodramatic in the very best way and powerfully down and dirty violent – bizarre, darkly funny at times, and then bitingly real as only our sometimes bizarre, darkly funny lives can be. The robbery feels real, but it also works in a metaphorical manner. A nightmare. But a nightmare some people don't wake up from. And one that lingers on Boyd's mind with almost nihilistic reflection. The grief-stricken Boyd spits, "It's so stupid and pointless to be alive in the morning and dead in the afternoon." Pray for peaceful Sunday. Or never pray again.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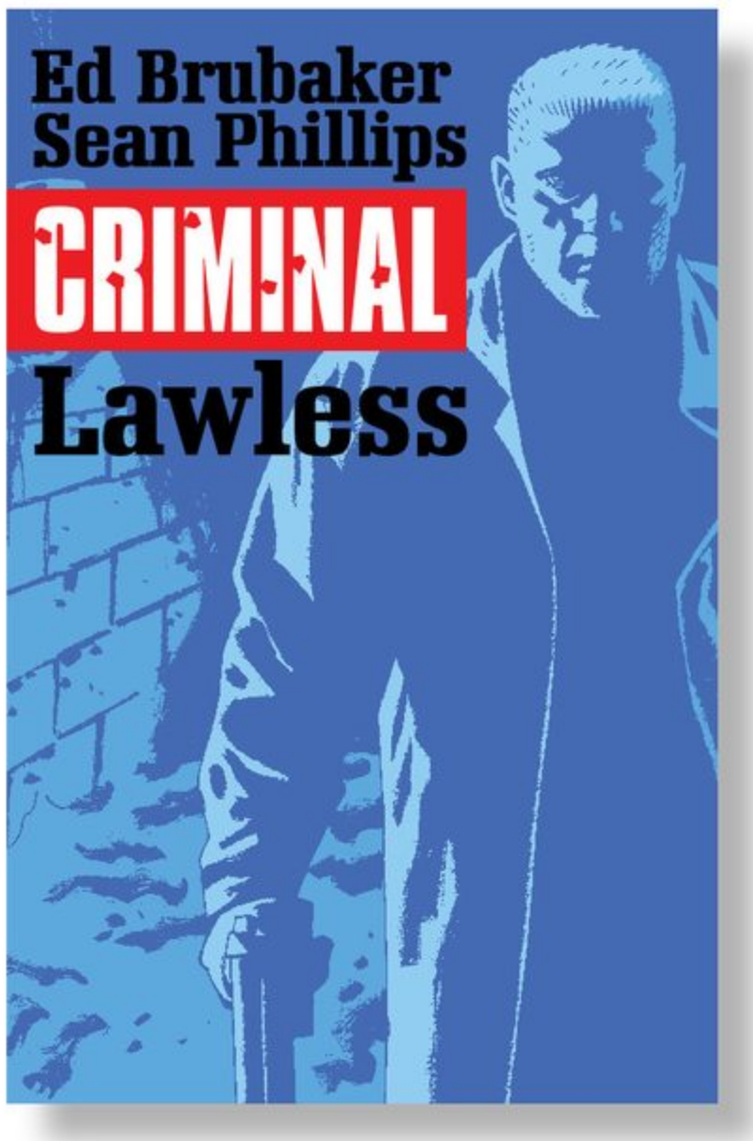
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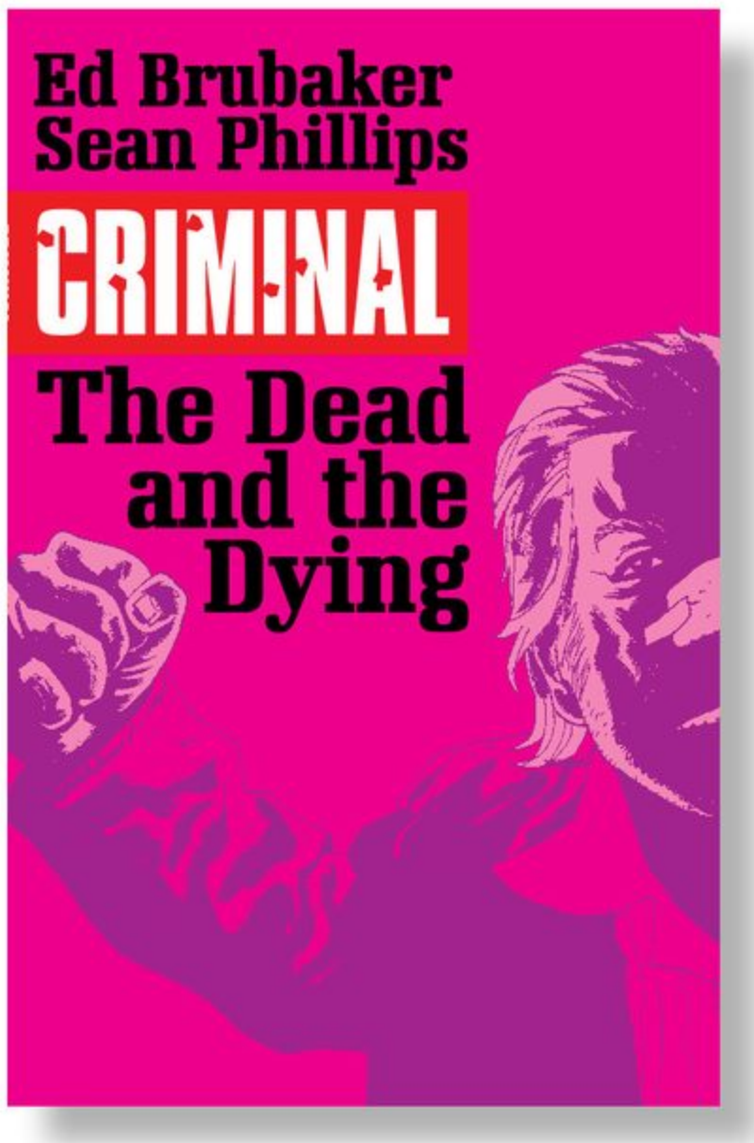
Sean Phillips
CRIMINAL
Lawless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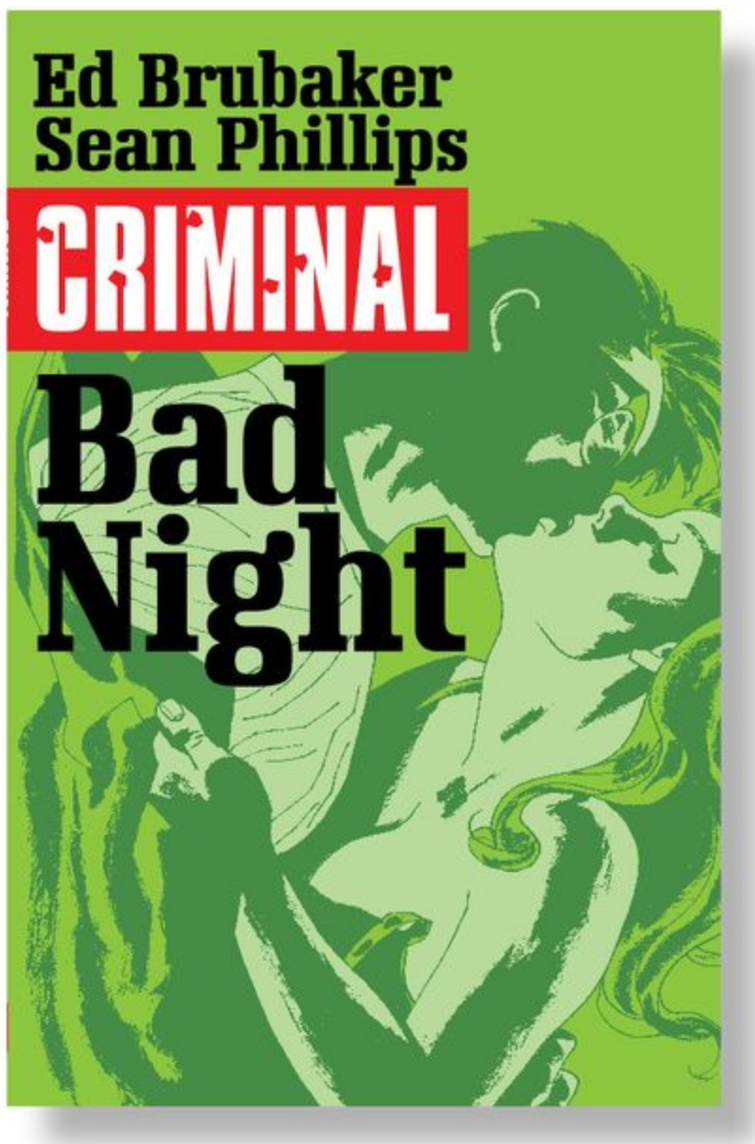
The Dead and the Dying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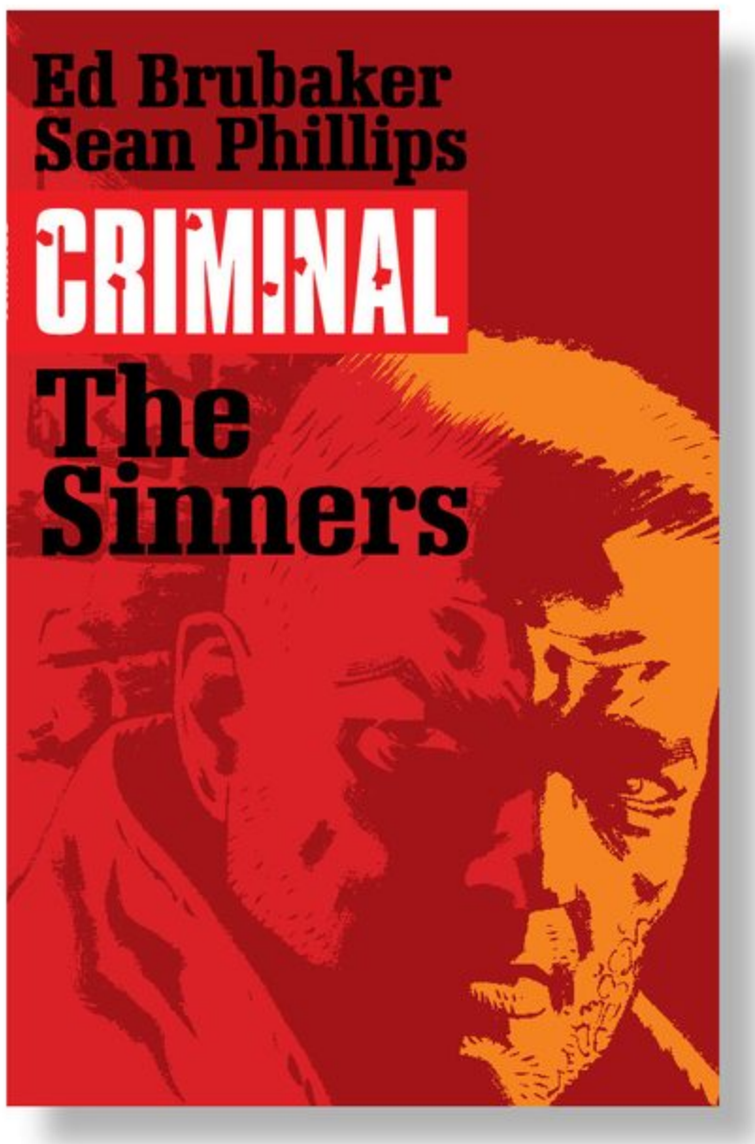
Bad Night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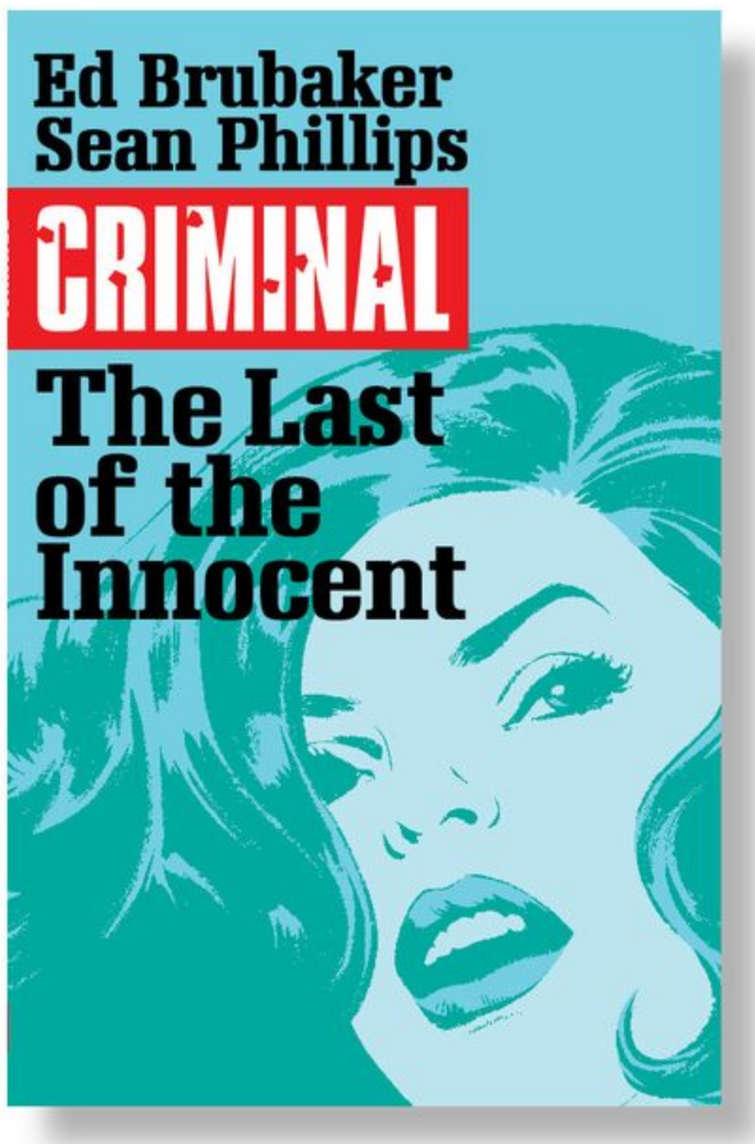
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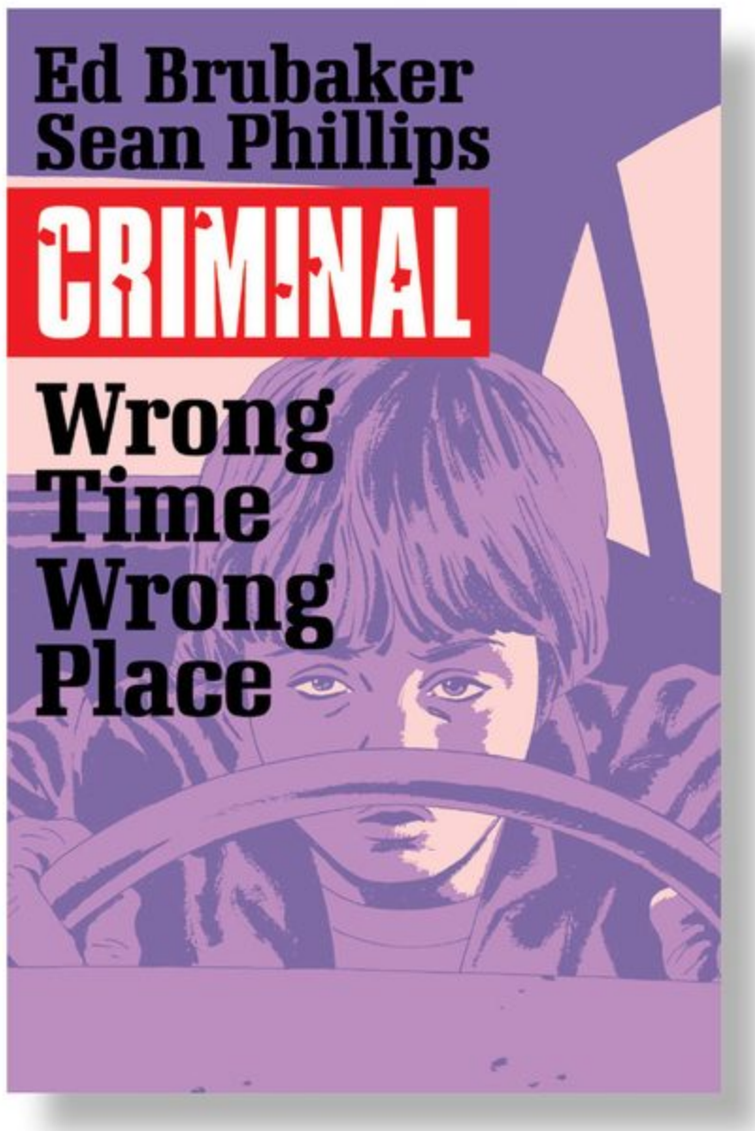
The Last of the Innocent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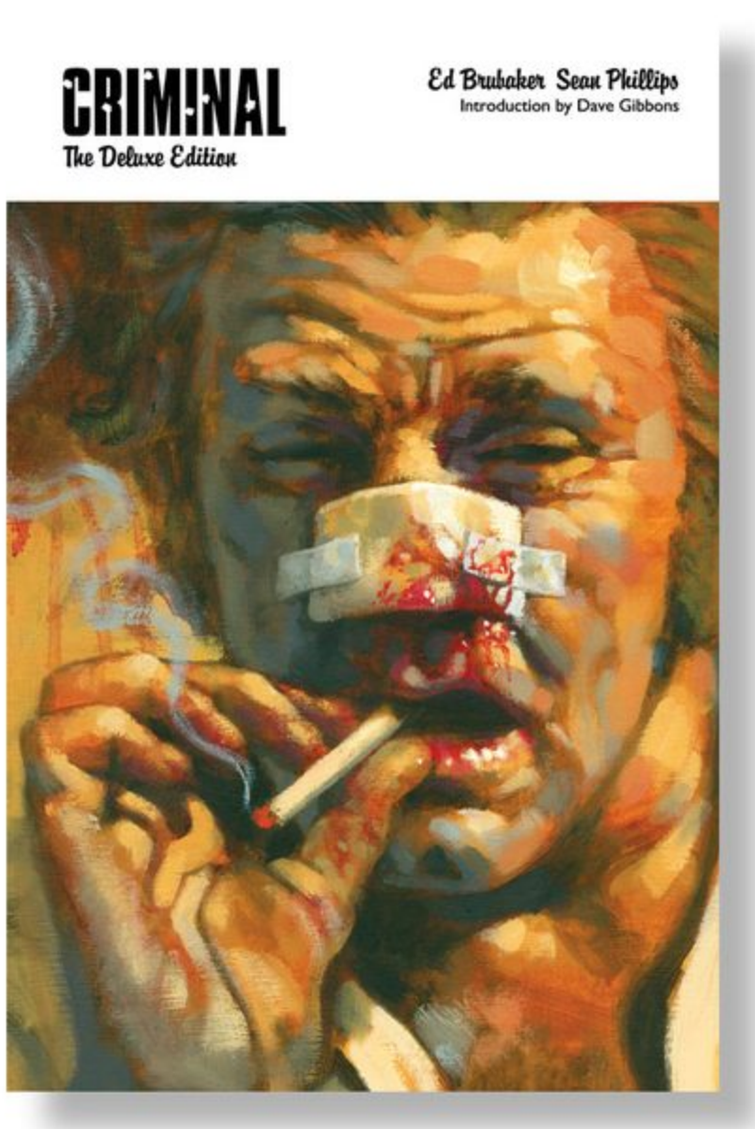
Wrong Time Wrong Place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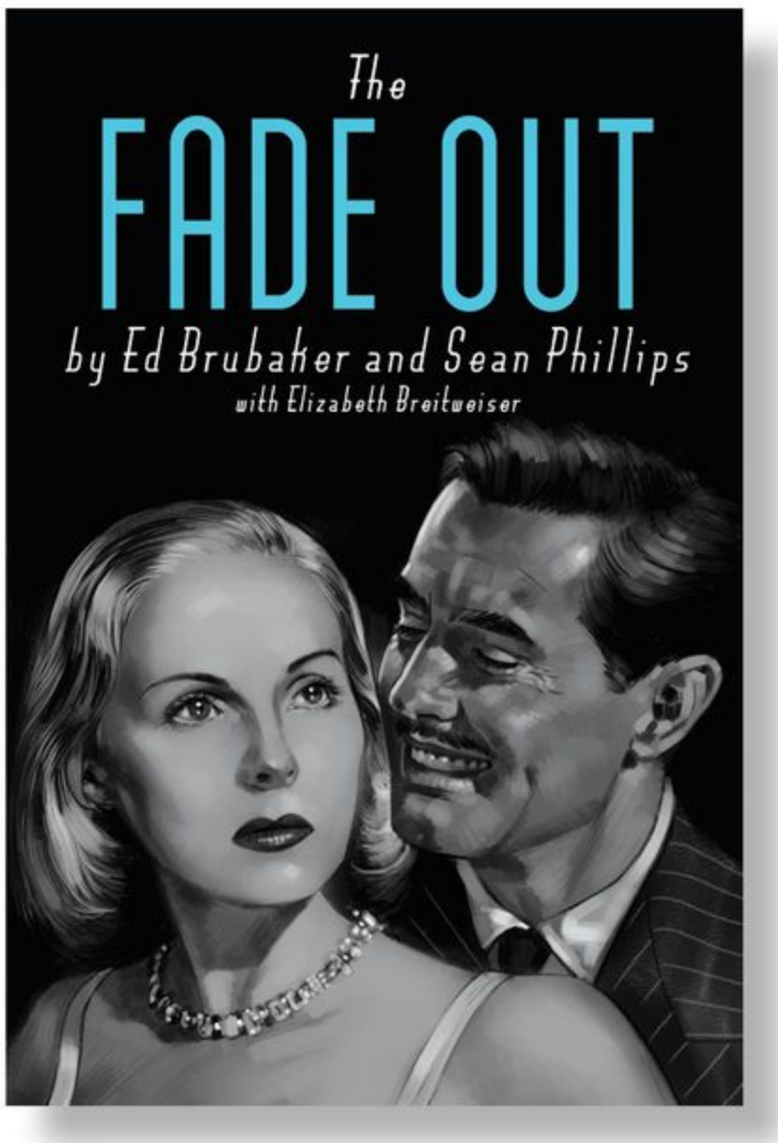
Ed Brubaker Sean Phillips
Introduction by Dave Gibbons

CRIMINAL
The Deluxe Edition Volume Two
Ed Brubaker Sean Phillips



"CRIMINAL is equal parts John Woo's THE KILLER, Stanley Kubrick's THE KILLING, and Francis Ford Coppola's THE GODFATHER."
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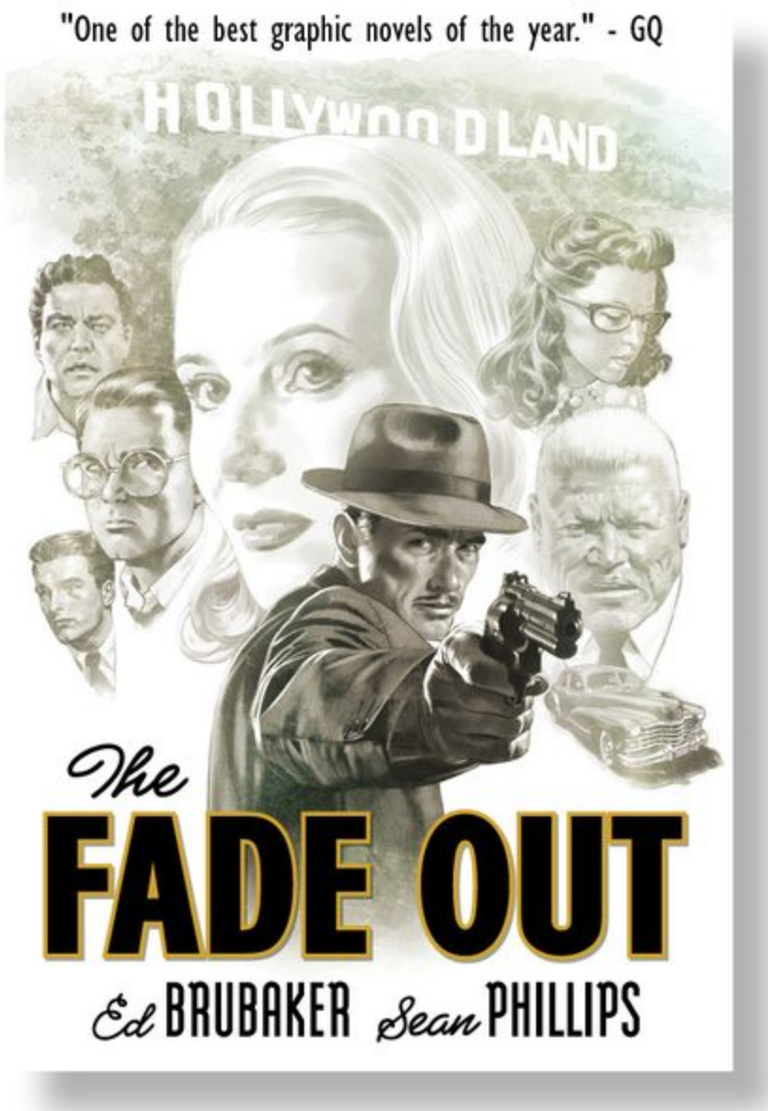

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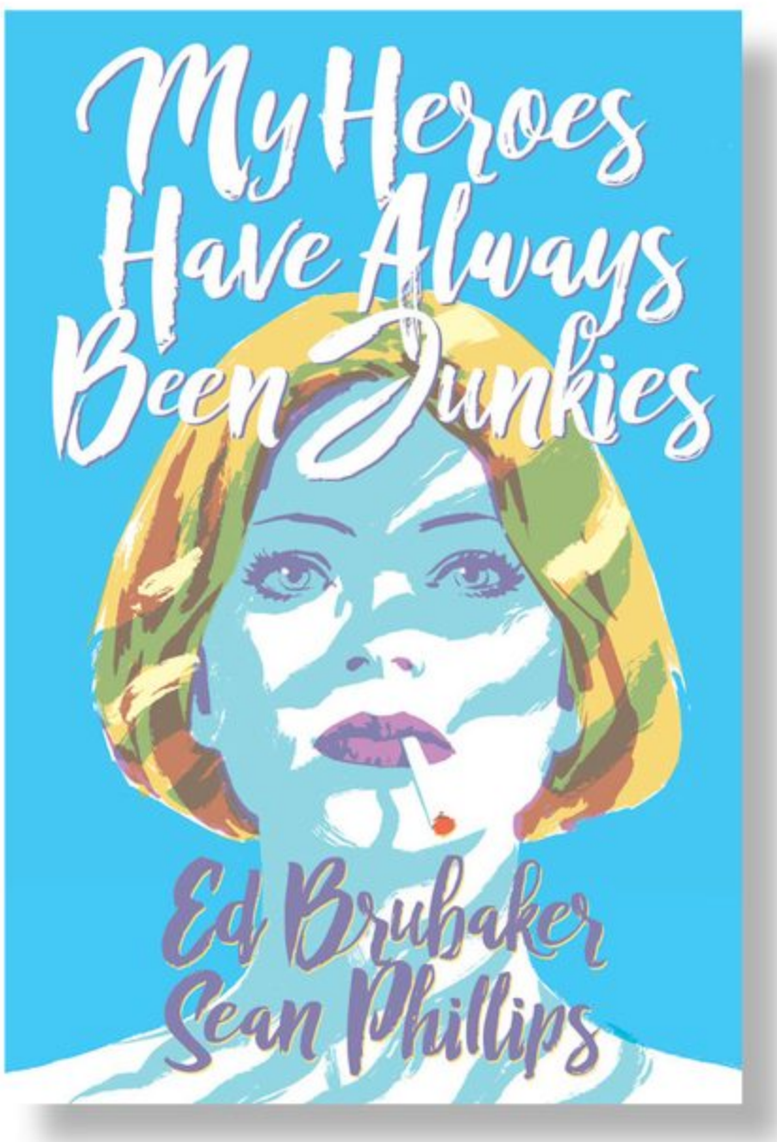

Newsweek's Best Comic Books of 2018
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Eisner Award Winner - Best Original Graphic Novel
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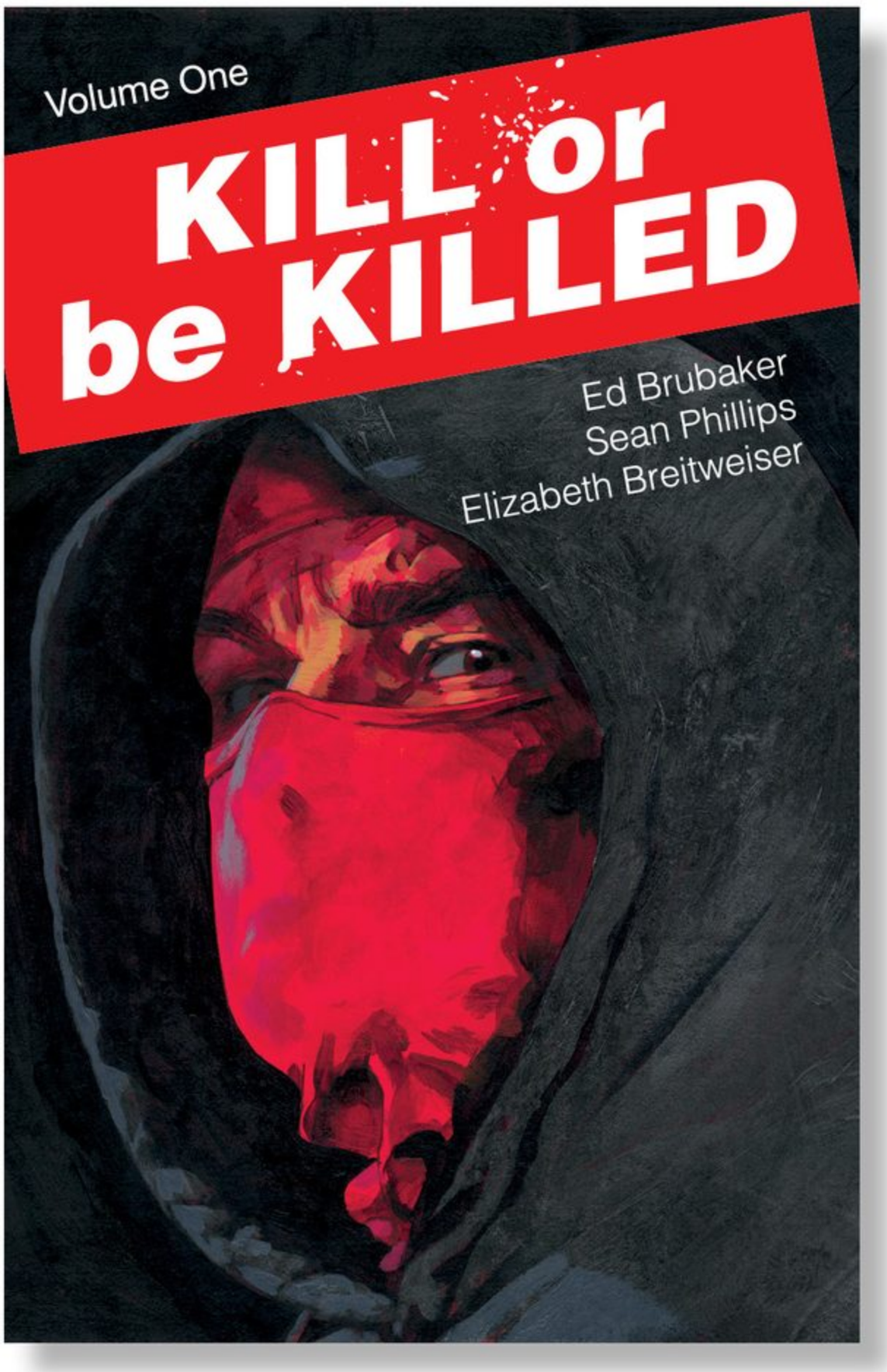
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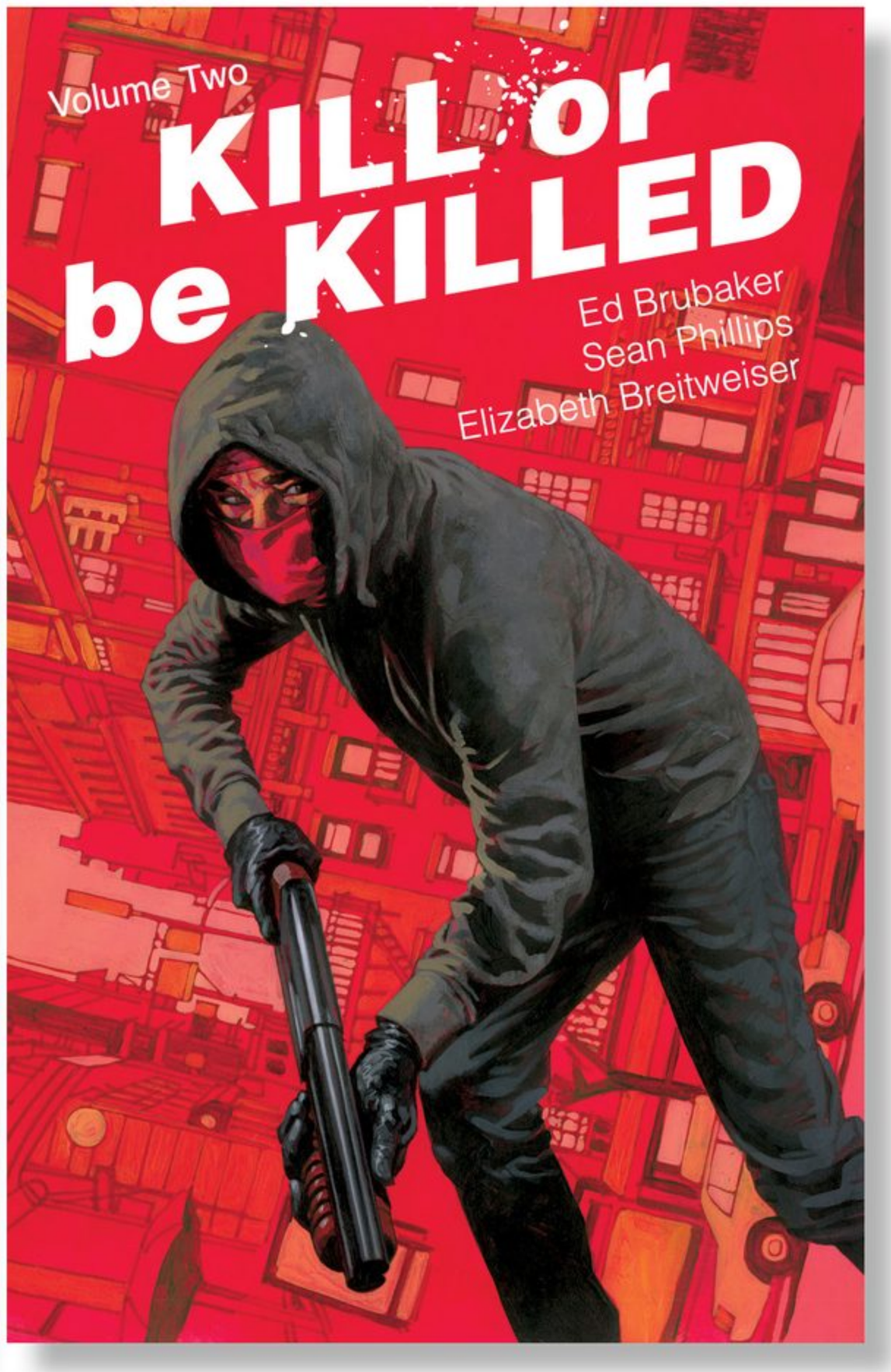
Elizabeth Breitweiser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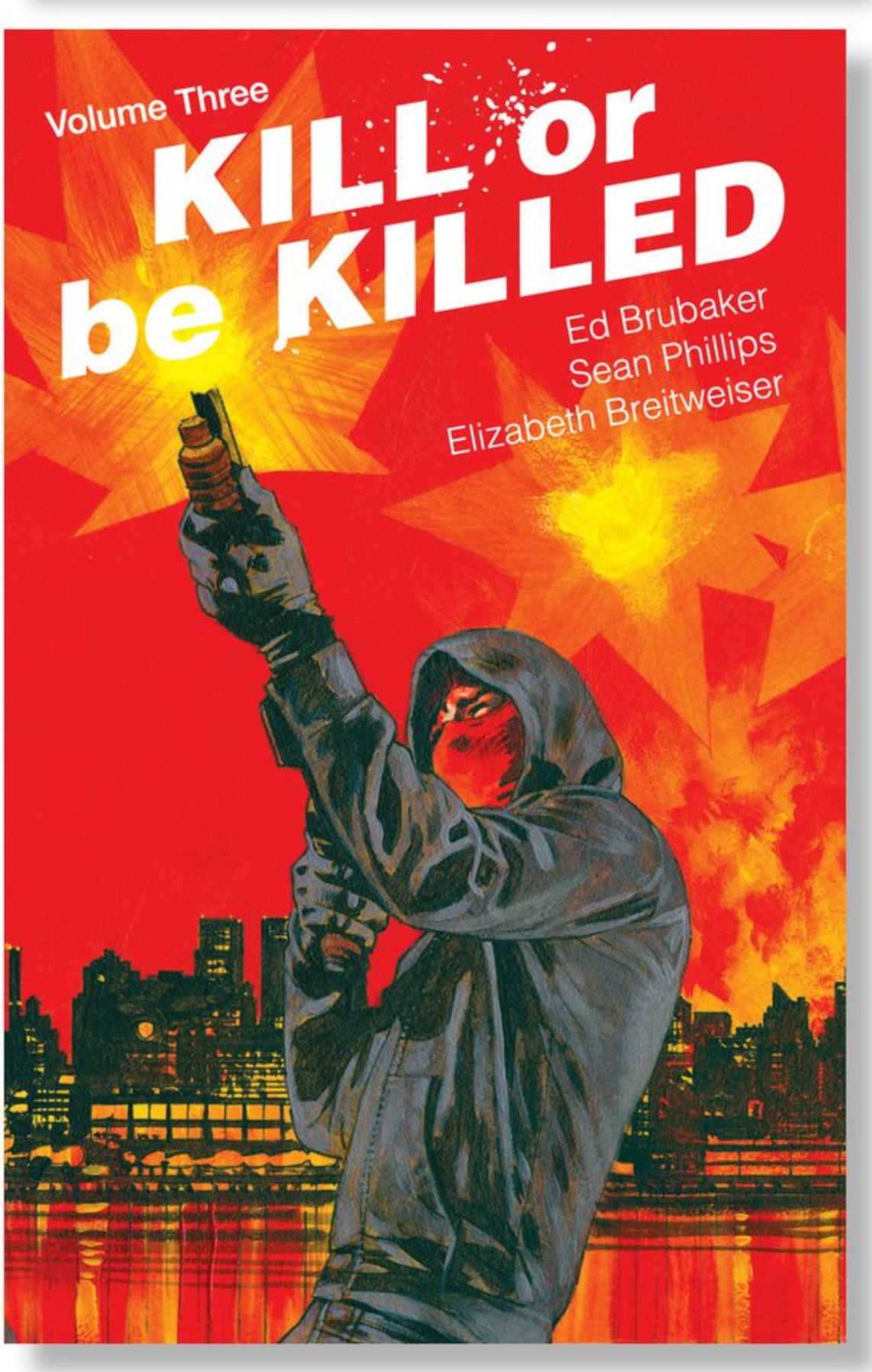
Volume Three
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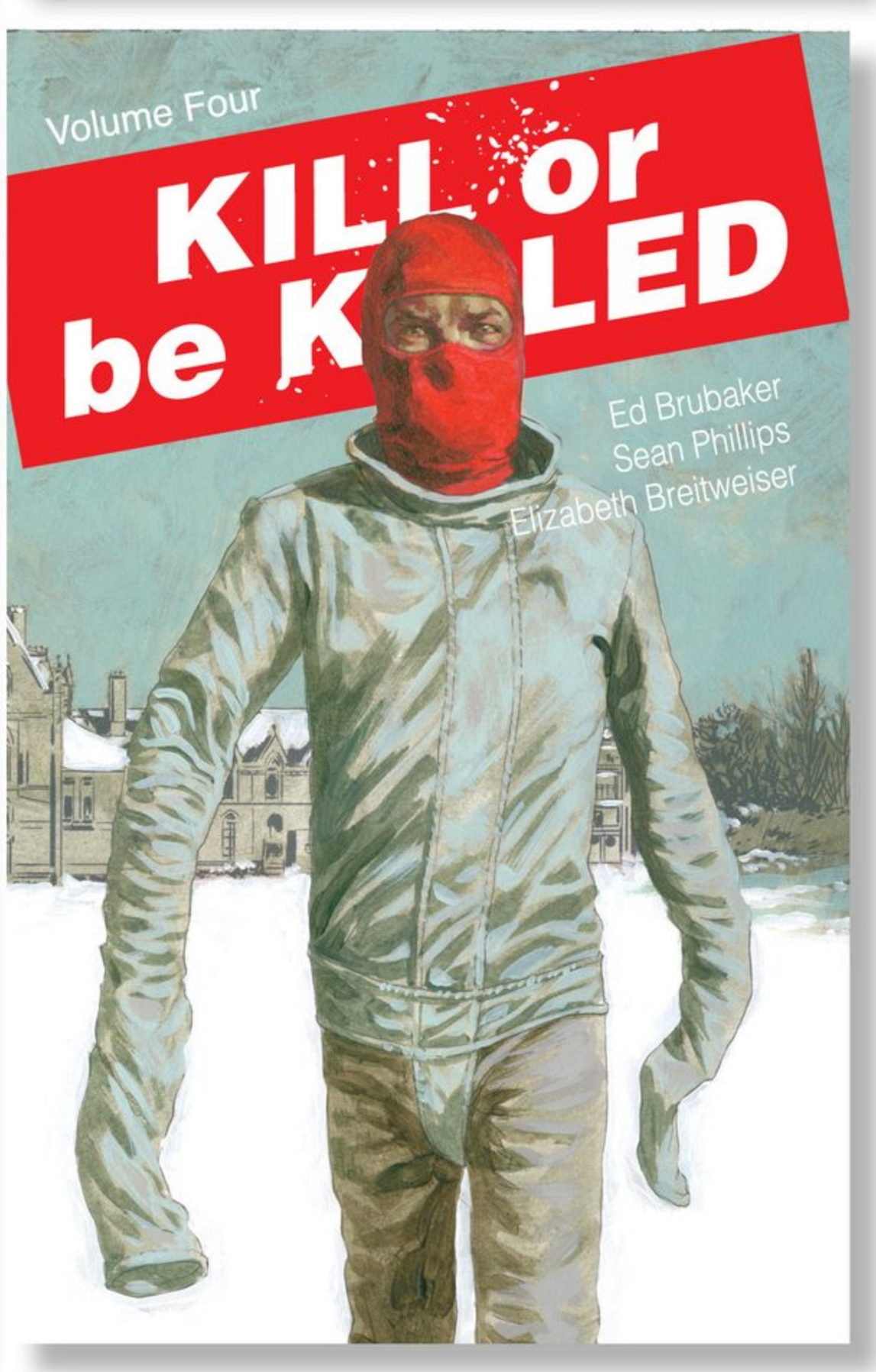
Volume Four
KILL or be KILLED
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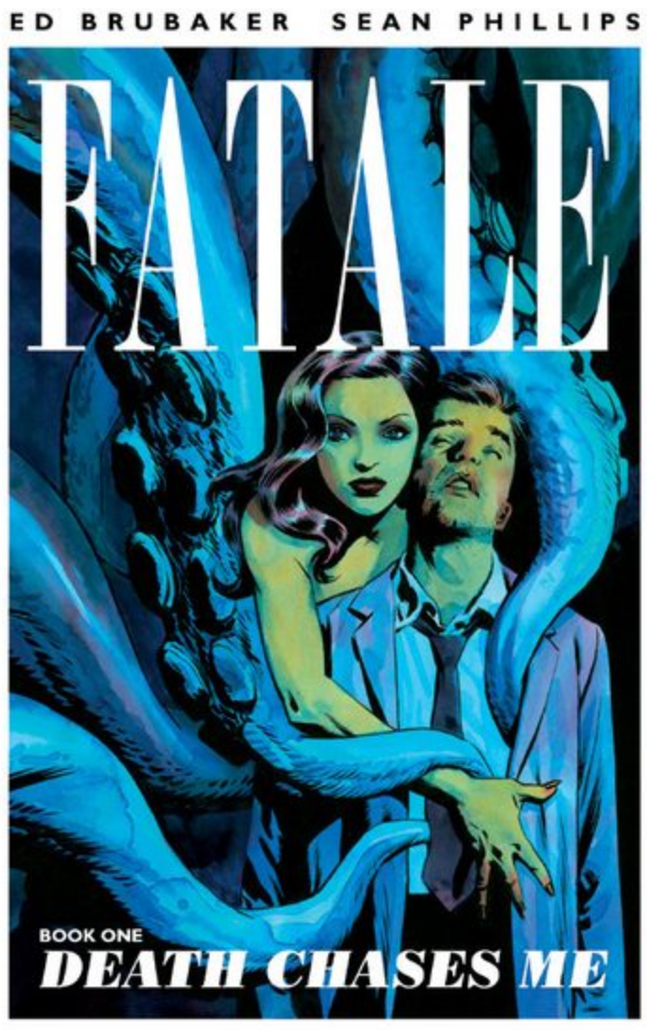

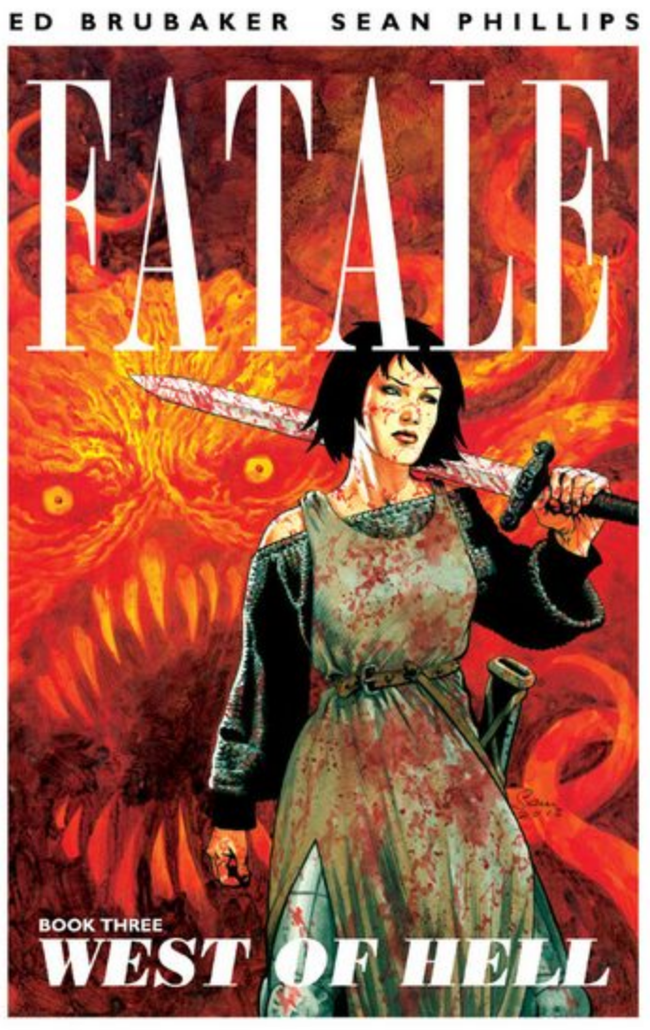

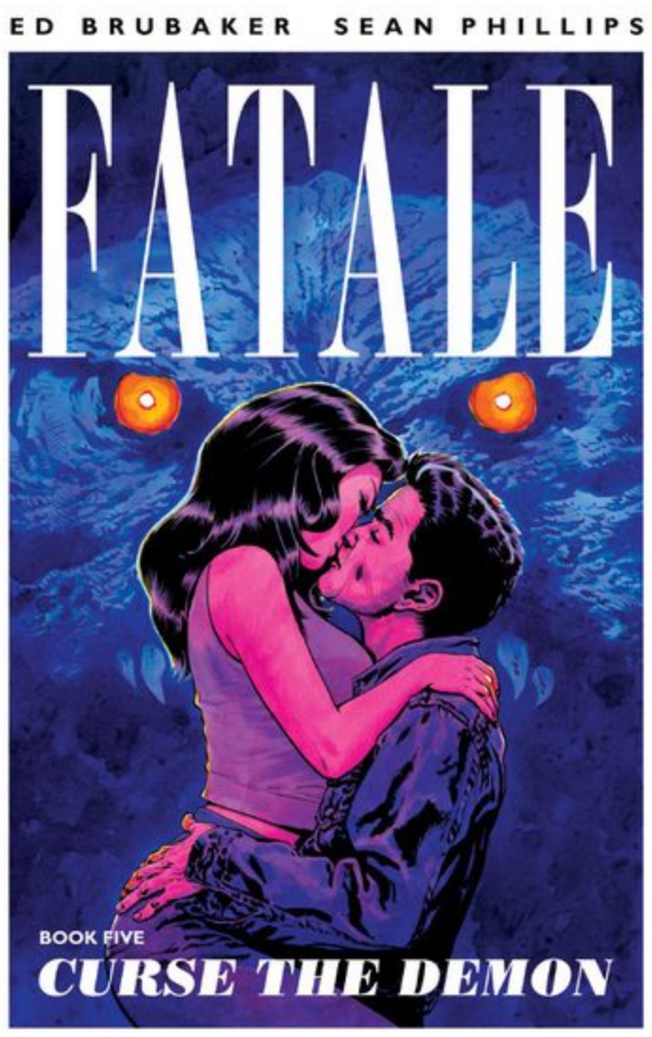

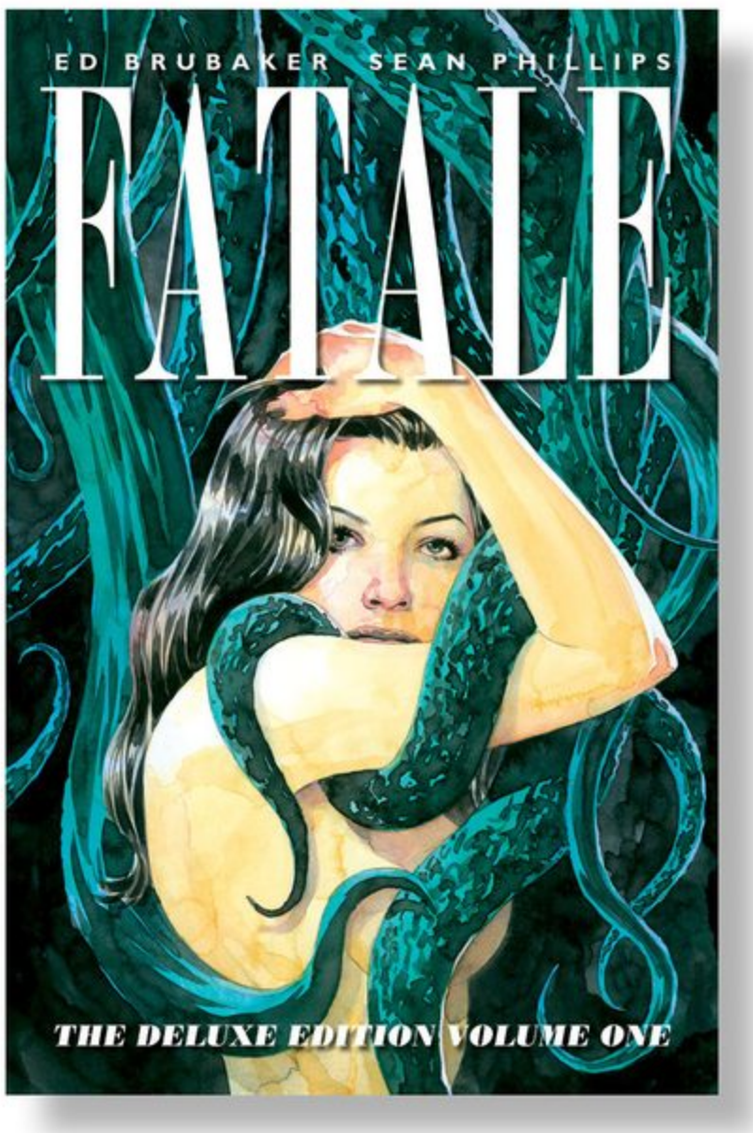

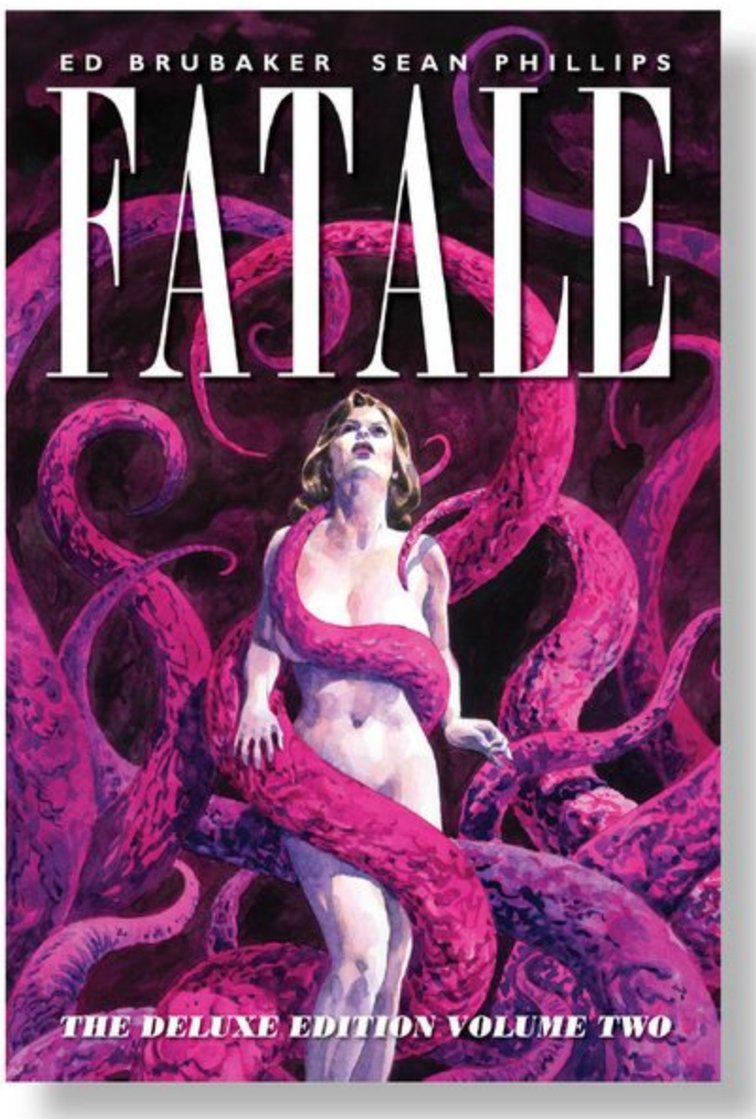

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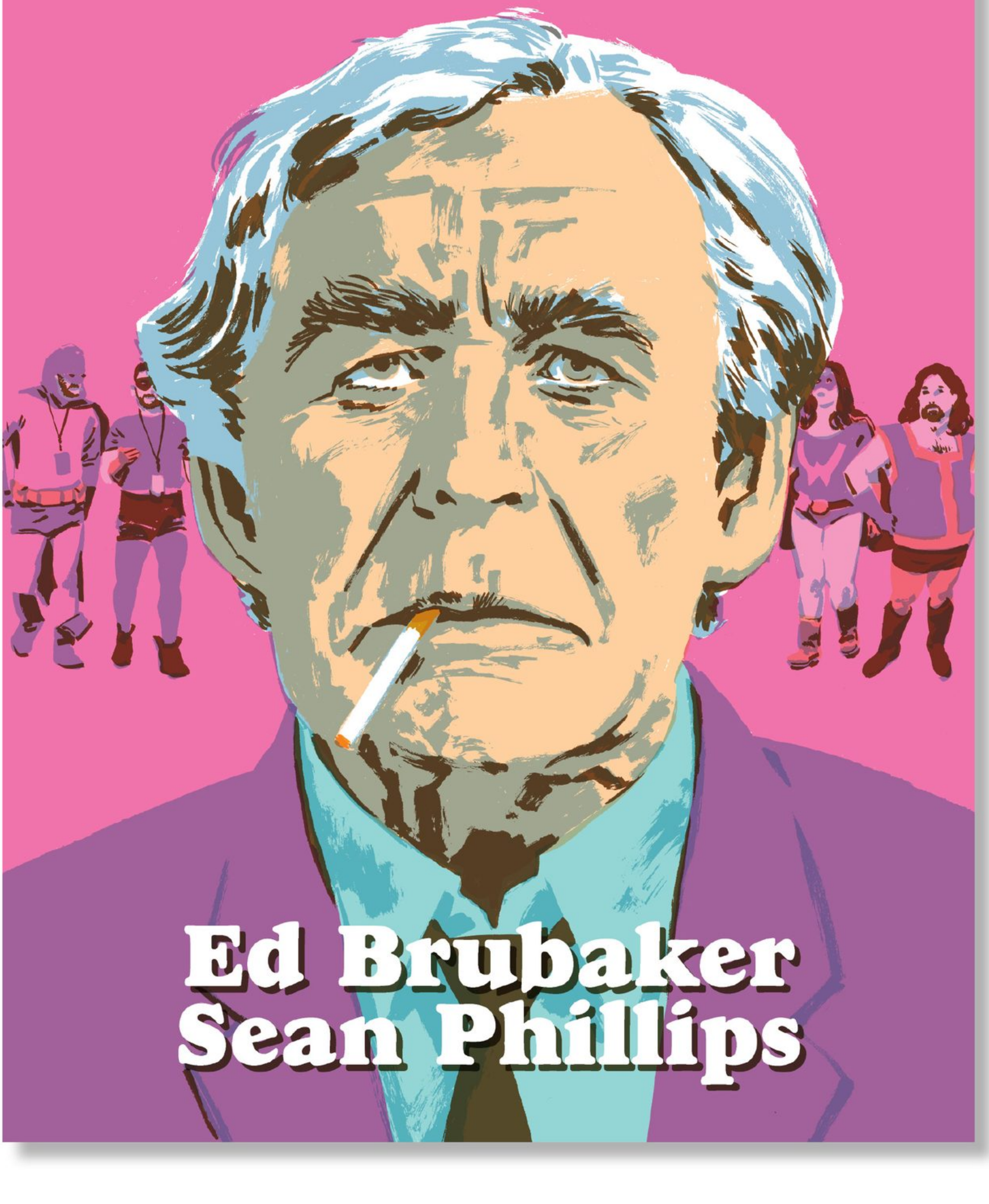
Bad Weekend



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